Self-presentation in the asynchronous communication on Facebook in Kenya and Uganda

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Abstract

Flows of languages, cultural forms and people both in real and virtual space are consequences of globalization. The mobility of people in the virtual sense is facilitated through the Internet, where one of the most popular ways of communication and self-presentation is currently through Facebook. This research focuses on analyzing the orthographic and lexical strategies in self-presentation on Kenyan and Ugandan Facebook profiles, trying to see whether the forms reflecting the East African variety of English are present in asynchronous communication and whether there is appropriation of other varieties and registers. This was done through a reiterative process of reading 10 Kenyan and 10 Ugandan Facebook profiles, comparing the findings with online data on informal sociolinguistic situations in Uganda and Kenya such as YouTube videos and comments, blogs and newspaper articles and through informal conversations with some Kenyans and Ugandans. The results showed that the local forms as described in the literature are used on Facebook and that there are forms unaccounted for in the literature but whose presence was confirmed in the online data and the informal conversations. Appropriation of American English and hip hop and Rastafari languages was found in the sample. It was inferred that English has several usages in the sample, which serve to express the neutral, the local and the appropriated meanings in the asynchronous communication on Facebook and that those meanings are used strategically for the creation of the desired identities.

Keywords

East African English, Netspeak, Facebook, globalization, global youth cultures, identity building, appropriation, pronunciation-revealing forms, pronunciation-showing forms.
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1. Introduction

Facebook, the most popular social network site, is nowadays the focus of many anthropological, psychological and linguistic studies, thanks to its widespread use around the world and the innovations it has brought to computer-mediated communication (CMC). It encompasses the functions of email, chat and Internet forum in an attractive layout that enables the users to present themselves to others and share information by means of text, image, and audio and video data.

A look at the English text of many Facebook users shows that there is an absence of the usual rules of orthography. This non-standard spelling, termed Netspeak by Crystal (2001), is not exclusive to Facebook; it has become the usual way of writing in CMC.

This research focuses on the asynchronous Facebook communication in a part of Anglophone Africa, Kenya and Uganda, which have both inherited English as the official language from colonial times. It is particularly interesting to look at this part of the world for several reasons. Kenyans and Ugandans can claim ownership of English because of the political and practical uses it has had in their countries as well as its relatively long institutional existence whose future does not seem to be in question. On the other hand, the linguistic features of English, spoken in Kenya and Uganda, are distinctive enough to call it the East African variety of English. In addition to that, there are ambivalent attitudes to the attractiveness of English as the global lingua franca and to the recent bitter colonial experience. It is interesting to look at how different identities of Kenyans and Ugandans affect the language use on Facebook, where there is a lack of non-verbal communication including audio and visual cues.

It should be pointed out that English is only one of the languages appearing on Kenyan and Ugandan Facebook pages; however, it is one of the most frequently used ones. Other languages, found in the course of the analysis, will only be listed. The analysis of the use of native languages is beyond the scope of this research. Codeswitching will only be analyzed at the word level.

This study has the following research questions in focus:

1) What forms reflecting the local variety of English as described in the literature can be identified in the asynchronous communication on Facebook in Kenya and Uganda?

2) What forms reflecting appropriation of other varieties and registers of English can be identified in the asynchronous communication on Facebook in Kenya and Uganda?

From these results, we may infer how Kenyan and Ugandan identities are formed on Facebook using language forms from different varieties and registers of English and what meanings the use of English has in Kenya and Uganda in connection to the globalized world.
1.1 Globalization

Globalization is interesting for linguistics, and especially sociolinguistics, because of the facilitated interaction among speakers enabled by the widespread use of the mass media, primarily the Internet, and the consequences of that interaction on linguistic realities in various communities. Relying on the work of Castells (1996) and Appadurai (1996), Blommaert (2010: 13) gives a definition of globalization: “The term globalization is most commonly used as a shorthand for the intensified flows of capital, goods, people, images and discourses around the globe, driven by technological innovations mainly in the field of media and information and communication technology, and resulting in new patterns of global activity, community organization and culture.” The flows of discourses and images as well as the new cultural phenomena arising in the process of globalization are of particular importance for this study.

To see globalization in terms of flows is important, according to Blommaert (2010) because such a view implies constant fluidity and mobility of people, cultures, and language forms, to mention just a few. Fluidity and mobility should be seen as both physical and virtual; their physical aspect being the constant and facilitated migration of people towards the countries of the West and the urban centers, and their virtual aspect being significant because of the possibility of movement in the virtual spaces in the online world. Cultures, such as hip hop and reggae, have spread around the world via modern media. Those cultures have become “a vehicle for the worldwide dissemination of particular language forms (Pennycook 2007; Richardson 2007)” (Blommaert 2010: 5). What made this possible is the transcultural quality of these cultures, which enables people around the world to find them desirable and adopt the language forms originating from them into their own linguistic repertoires.

The concepts of language and space have lost significance in the era of globalization, according to Blommaert (2010). Instead of operating within the concept of language, he writes that sociolinguists should think in terms of registers, styles and varieties that reflect more closely the mixed and the hybrid nature of the linguistic reality. Similarly, the understanding of the concept of space should be reconsidered because of the transnational dimension of the linguistic reality. The transnational dimension can be reached through using international languages, such as English or French. Those languages, as well as other lingua francas and diaspora languages, are “derritorialized languages” (Blommaert 2010: 46) because they are not connected to one territory.

Two more terms should be defined – crossing and appropriation. Crossing is “code alternation by people who are not accepted members of the group associated with the second language they employ.” (Rampton 1995: 280). Appropriation is the process in which “language is adopted as a tool and utilized in various ways to express widely differing cultural experience” (Ashcroft, Griffiths &Tiffin 1989: 38). Since they were first defined, these terms have been used in many studies focusing on the widespread occurrence of various modes of linguistic mobility facilitated by globalization. Without
these terms, it would be almost impossible to analyze and describe the transnational and transcultural linguistic phenomena occurring in the communities which are at the center of this research.

1.2 Global youth culture

In terms of age, youth are the most numerous users of the Internet, and, in particular, social network sites (SNS), one of which is Facebook. The creativity of the youth and global youth culture have helped to create the English language on the Internet as it is today. The language forms belonging to that register of English, Netspeak, have spread across the varieties of World Englishes. The identities found and analyzed on Facebook are, generally speaking, youth identities. The pragmatic and orthographic rules on Facebook have been created by this age group, which make up the biggest part of the users. That is why the dominant youth identities, role models and youth global culture need to be taken into consideration when doing a study on Netspeak.

Rather than aiming to define the global youth culture with precision, I would like to mention a few of its important parts that are significant for this research. They are important primarily from the linguistic point of view although they can be analyzed from many other perspectives. In the analysis of the global youth culture nowadays, hip hop and American culture are something that should not be left out. None of them belongs to only one cultural category; they have rather developed into lifestyles and identities, comprising a whole range of cultural phenomena such as language, fashion, way of communication and a set of values that are intertwined in such a unique way that can be recognized worldwide and identified as the global youth culture. The spread of the global youth culture has been made possible by popularization of the modern media and has reached its climax with the mass use of the Internet.

Although another cultural form, reggae, will be significant for this research, it should be mentioned that, although widespread, it has not reached the same level of mainstream usage needed for it to be globally accepted with so much impact as hip hop, for example. However, reggae is significant for the analysis of the global youth culture in Africa for the reasons that will be mentioned in Section 1.10.

Hip hop has been analyzed in many studies as a global phenomenon (Alim, Ibrahim & Pennycook 2009; Blommaert 2010; Ntarangwi 2009; Fenn & Gilman 2006; Androutsopoulos 2007). It developed, from a local subculture, originally belonging to the Afro-American population, into a global low-prestige culture that has partly become mainstream. Pennycook and Mitchell (2009) explain that this success of hip hop came through its ability to acquire a local reference. Although American hip hop is the most dominant form, Pennycook and Mitchell (2009) point out to the existence of several centers of global hip hops, comparing this phenomenon to the plurality of existence of localized Englishes –global or world Englishes. These authors write about the flows of hip hop,
giving examples of an Aboriginal and a Somali-Canadian hip hopper who are both “part of the global Hip Hop movement, identifying with and also rejecting different aspects of its global formation; they benefit from and participate in the rapid flows of music and ideas made possible in the digital age and yet they remain highly critical of Western ways of viewing the world and of the bias in particular forms of historical reasoning.” This “glocalization” of hip hop shows “how local Hip Hop can be both part of international popular culture while at the same time articulating local philosophies of global significance.” (Pennycook & Mitchell 2009: 27).

From the point of view of the language, it is important to notice that hip hop has a distinctive vocabulary, pragmatics and grammar and also makes extensive use of slang. Blommaert (2010: 19) states that “many ‘global’ (including English) features are adopted in this search for authenticity, many others are rejected as well, and alongside the globalized African-American English hip-hop register we often see the emergence of similar registers in the local languages as well.” Pennycook and Mitchell (2009) write that a way to localize hip hop is to use the local languages or a language mix which can be seen as making a political or cultural statement (for example, a mix of Turkish, German and American English in Germany, or rapping in Maori in New Zealand).

Hip hop is not the only product of the American continent that has become a part of the global youth culture. Music, such as pop broadcasted on MTV, is listened to worldwide. Additionally, Hollywood productions are popular in almost all the corners of the world. The dispersion of American culture has, as a consequence, the spreading of American values and images of America. Its dominant political and economic position are reflected on the “particular imagery of the USA and American cultural symbols as being in the forefront of globalization and of upward global mobility.” (Blommaert 2010: 49).

Blommaert (2010: 48) calls English “the language that defines globalization”, however he points out how prestigious the American accent currently is. Giving an interesting example of the online courses of the American accent, he suggests that what is offered in those courses is “not just the language as linguistic structure but also the language as a densely loaded ideological format, something that is far more than a language but also an acquirable imagery of the self as being ‘in the world’.” (Blommaert 2010: 49).

The Internet is “the defining technology of globalization” (Blommaert 2010) and it could be argued that the defining communication style of globalization is computer-mediated communication. The young population are not only passive users of CMC but also creators of much of its content, and are especially responsible for the new forms of language on it. One of the most important forms of CMC is SNS such as MySpace, Twitter, YouTube and Facebook. Although Facebook inherited most of the communication practices (for example pragmatics and language forms) from the earlier forms of CMC such as email, chat and Internet forums, it has united them into a single interface and helped their spread and regularization.
1.3 Internet and CMC

The properties of CMC started to be discussed with the emergence of new technologies such as mobile telephone text messaging and email. It was defined by Cathcart and Gumpert (1986: 30) as “any person-to-person communication where a medium has been interposed to transcend the limitations of time and space.” Although CMC language has not undergone any formal standardization processes, it can be argued that its use is fairly regulated. Abbreviated forms (for example, *OMG* for ‘Oh, my God!’), expressive language (*I looooooove you*) and numerical writing (for example, *l8r* for ‘later’) are very frequent in CMC, whereas they would be frowned upon in Standard English. In other words, their presence does not draw particular attention; it is expected and it became standard-like (Sebba 2003a). This intentional deviation from the mainstream is what Sebba (2003a) calls “spelling rebellion”. Although it has occurred before (in graffiti, for example), it has never reached such expansion as the one present in CMC.

The occurrence of the new style of writing stems from the character of the new media – the Internet. As Frehner (2008) explains, the CMC orthography (not confined to the Internet, but present in text messages (SMS) as well) is motivated by the principles of least effort, mode limitation (especially in SMS), and by the wish to speed up the exchange of information. The new technology has enabled the participants in the conversation to communicate faster which made it more speech-like. However, due to some initial limitations (the limited number of characters in text messages), of the same technologies, abbreviated forms came into existence and kept being used even after the limitations have disappeared.

Many studies have been written about the nature of CMC as opposed to the natures of speech and writing or as their combination (Baron 2008; Crystal 2001). Frehner (2008: 16) says that CMC is a hybrid register that mixes the features of the spoken language with those of the written language and that it is shifting towards the spoken language and beyond. Georgakopoulou (2011: 94) suggests that “CMC is recognized as combining qualities which are typically associated with face-to-face interactions - i.e. immediacy and informality of style, transience of message, reduced planning and editing, rapid feedback (or immediate feedback in certain discourse types, e.g electronic-chat) - with properties of written language, i.e. lack of visual and paralinguistic cues, physical absence of the addressee and written mode of delivery, etc.”

Detailed analysis of emails, speech and written text shows the pragmatic similarity between emails and speech that results in the syntactic similarity. Frehner (2008: 67) lists some of the specific features that make speech and CMC (emails) similar. One of them is the frequent use of causative and conditional subordinators, giving the email discourse a quality of “loose presentation of information due to real-time production constraints” (Biber 1988:107). Another feature of spoken discourse that occurs in emails according to Frehner (2008: 72) is the high frequency of occurrence of discourse markers. Their role is to structure the otherwise fragmented email text in a similar way as they do it with the spoken discourse. Interjections and emoticons are also used a lot as they help to express the
speaker’s emotion which is more visible in the spoken discourse due to the body language and the tone of voice. Slang also helps in assimilating CMC to speech, relaxing the tone of conversation and making it more personal. “Slang expressions tell the reader something about the writer’s surroundings, e.g. where he comes from and what social background he has, and thus give the message a personal touch” (Frehner 2008: 73). In other words, they serve the purpose of what extralinguistic information provides in the offline world.

1.4 The role of orthography in CMC

The way the text is presented in CMC is very important. The orthography (the form) often matters as much as the meaning (the content).

New technology has given the opportunity to the interlocutors for a faster communication and the orthography had to be changed accordingly. One of the changes was the shortening in spelling, caused by the limitation factor (Frehner 2008) and the need for rapid communication (Barasa 2010). Thurlow (2003: 14) argues that nowadays “the need for both brevity and speed appears to be motivated less by technological constraints, but rather by discursive demands such as ease of turn-taking and fluidity of social interaction.”

Since the interlocutors in CMC are not engaging in face-to-face communication, a lot of linguistic and extralinguistic cues have to be transferred by the text itself. Thurlow (2003) mentions the maxim of paralinguistic restitution that exists in CMC and through which the CMC orthography aims to make up for the loss of the information such as intonation and stress. As a result, there are respellings including capitalization and multiple punctuation.

Section 1.3 discusses how important it is for the CMC orthography to come close to speech as much as possible. One of the strategies used in that effort is phonological approximation (Thurlow 2003) or representation of spoken forms (Shaw 2008). Frehner (2008: 59) analyses phonological approximation in CMC as well, and suggests: “Due to the spoken-like character of computer-mediated communication, there is a tendency to spell the words in such a way that they represent the specific pronunciation of their user.” Lee (2003: 219) calls it “mock oral writing” and says that it represents a way to visualize talk. Shaw (2008) writes that, by using such spelling, the writer reveals his actual variant (for example “larf” instead of “laugh”, revealing the non-rhotic pronunciation of the writer). Barasa (2010) uses the principle of informal communication in the analysis of her data, noticing that her informants used the orthography that reflected local pronunciation (for example thengiu written to show the way “thank you” would be pronounced in Kikuyu). This tendency of CMC contributed a lot to the promotion of the languages that used to be restricted only to the spoken medium as Hinrichs’ (2006) study of Jamaican Creole in emails showed. Similarly, Barasa (2008: 36) writes that “the lack of institutional constraints and the ‘triumph of informality’ in vernacular languages in CMC encourage the ‘literalization’ of varieties that were traditionally confined to spoken disc.”

One of the features of CMC discourse is the tendency to convey additional information about the social background of the author as well as their socio-cultural environment
through the use of regionalisms and slang (cf. Section 1.3). Non-standard orthography can serve this function as well. Sebba (2007b: 5) wrote about the importance of “accounting for orthographic choices in their social context”, focusing particularly on understanding the reasons for deviation from conventional spelling. He showed how different identities and attitudes can be presented through the usage of unconventional orthography because social meaning can be created through making orthographic choices. In other words, certain spellings carry a symbolic value that ascribes the text an additional, social meaning.

The motivation for the usage of non-standard spellings lies in the fact that they convey some kind of social meaning that is often covert-prestige. Through non-standard spelling the desirable social meaning can be appropriated by the non-authentic users. Sebba (2003b) gives the example of the Ali G websites in which the users communicate in the Ali G language, a variant of London Jamaican, that they never got a chance to use in the real world. The next section will explain further how Facebook can help create identities online, why the users might wish to alter the images of self that they present in the online world and which identities are particularly desirable for appropriation.

To summarize, the non-standard orthography in CMC has two main roles: 1) it aims to present the text as closely to speech as possible, 2) it aims to convey more information about the user or his/her extralinguistic situation that the semantic content of the text itself does.

1.5 Netspeak style of spelling

Most of the spelling in Netspeak is done in a non-standard way. Sebba (2003) calls these non-standard forms “respellings”. There have been many classifications of non-standard spelling (Thurlow 2003; Al-Sa’di & Hamdan 2005; Shaw 2008; Frehner 2008; Barasa 2010). Many of the categories in these classifications overlap, however they are more or less suitable depending on the focus of the research. For the purposes of this paper, Shaw’s (2008) and Frehner’s (2008) classifications will be of particular importance. Frehner’s classification is significant for this paper because of the category of phonological approximation.

Letter and number homophones: *ur* ‘you are’, 4 ‘for’
Clippings: *jus* ‘just’, *nex* ‘next’
Consonant spelling: *cn* ‘can’, *wdnt* ‘wouldn’t’
Omission of apostrophes: *dads* ‘dad’s’, *hellens* ‘Hellen’s’
Emulated prosody and onomatopoeic exclamatory spelling (including Capitalization, exclamatory expressions, reduplication of letters etc): *I loooove you!, mmmmmwwahh, get FREE DRINK!*
Phonological approximation: *bin* ‘been’, *gud* ‘good’, *afta* ‘after’, *dayz* ‘days’

(From Frehner 2008)
Shaw’s (2008) innovation is taking the sociolinguistic aspects into consideration. He created two categories: representation of spoken forms and regularization of irregular spelling. The first of these two categories includes phonologically approximated words that represent non-standard pronunciation such as bein for ‘being’ and da for ‘the’. Non-standard spellings from this category do not tell us much about the location of the speakers; they “show the accentual/dialectal persona which the writer chooses to present at this point” (Shaw 2008: 43). The origin of these non-standard spellings and their underlying pronunciation is often from the varieties or registers other than the CMC user’s in question. The reason for appropriation of these non-standard spellings is the desire to look “cool”, trendy, tough, etc. The other of Shaw’s categories, regularization of irregular spelling, includes non-standard spellings whose underlying pronunciation is standard for the variety of user in question. They reveal the actual, stylistically non-marked pronunciation. The non-standard spellings from this category can tell us a lot about the location of the speaker, i.e. about which variety the user belongs to. Because these spellings are standard and unmarked, they are used spontaneously whereas the spellings from the first category are used with a purpose, to show a marked pronunciation and they are alien to the user’s actual variety. To summarize, the category of regularization of irregular spelling contains pronunciation-showing respellings used to build up a persona of the CMC user and the category of regularization of irregular spelling contains pronunciation-revealing respellings that can show us what the actual pronunciation of the writer could be. This classification recognizes the ability of CMC users to take on different identities via different spellings and it also acknowledges the nature of SNS as virtual places where one can create his/her identity.

1.6 Facebook

This section will focus on the definition of terms connected to Facebook, its functions and the possibilities it gives to its users in identity creation.

Facebook is currently the most popular SNS. SNS can be defined as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or a semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (boyd & Elisson 2007: 211). Facebook has been undergoing constant changes introduced over the years by its developers, however, the core features of Facebook, significant for this research, do not change.

It was mentioned in the introduction of this paper that Facebook combines many of the features of the other forms of CMC. The communication on Facebook is going on between the profile owner and his/her Friends. It is possible to apply the definition of SNS above in explaining who Friends are. They are “users with whom they [profile owners] share a connection” (boyd & Elisson 2007: 211).
The Status can be said to resemble away messages from IM. Although the purpose of the away messages in the beginning was to announce that the users were unavailable at the moment and possibly why they were unavailable, Baron (2008: 18) says that “away messages have become far more creative tools in the hands of teenagers and young adults.” Using Goffman’s (1959) terms “onstage” and “backstage”, Baron (2008: 73) suggests: “Think of away messages as a form of “onstage” behavior in contrast to IM conversations, which are more “backstage” activity.” It can be said that the Status and the away messages share some features (cf. Baron 2008), namely, they both initiate discussion or social encounter and they convey personal information such as the current activity, personal opinion and sense of humor. Both the Status and away messages are public by nature and have a direction one-to-many; however, the Status is more interactive because the Friends of the profile owner can write comments under it. The thread that appears below the Status thus resembles discussions that can be found on Internet Forums.

The place on the profile where Friends and the owners themselves post content is called the Wall. In addition to the textual content, multimodal content can be posted as well. This interactive function of Facebook enables the Friends to co-create each other’s homepages (Walter et al. 2011). Jacobs (2003: 13) argues that “[…] onstage places [the Wall and the Status, in this case] are where alliances are declared and social positions and presence are established.”

1.7 Building identities online

The presentation of self is central to the understanding of the nature of CMC, especially Facebook. Boyd (2006) defines Facebook profile generation as “an explicit act of writing oneself into being a digital environment.” Baron (2008: 76) suggests that “computer-mediated communication invites construction of new identities (for age, gender, personality, nationality and the like)”. An individual (the profile owner) can present himself/herself visually through a profile photo, and textually, giving information about the age, relationship status, origin, education, hobbies, interests, favorite quotes etc. However, a great deal of identity building is a continual process, happening through the interaction of the profile owner and the Friends on the profile Wall. Facebook users have the possibility of presenting themselves the way they want to be seen by others. Baron (2008: 85) quotes a Facebook employee who says that the site is about “emphasizing different aspects of their personality” while another interviewee, a Facebook user, says that a Facebook Profile “can be more an expression of who one wants to be rather than who one really is.” Walther et al. (2011: 32) write: “Web-users are well aware of the impressions they construct in the pursuit of relationships, and consider carefully the balance between honest disclosure versus socially desirable distortion in selecting communication strategies to attract others online (Gibbs, Elisson, & Heino 2006). ”The target impressions are often connected to being “cool”, tough, trendy, modern etc. The currently prestigious images of self are closely connected to the values of the global youth culture mentioned in one of the previous chapters. By presenting themselves as being familiar with those cultures, the users
automatically appear as “cool” and trendy in the eyes of their Friends.

In multilingual societies, using different languages serves to create different identities. In his study of Jamaican Creole and English codeswitching in email communication, Hinrichs (2006) explores the added communicative value through the use of codeswitching. He suggests that Jamaican Creole is used in emails “for the creation of styles that can be used in creating personae with specific social meanings” (Hinrichs 2006: 90). Gasser (2008: 67) pointed out that “as more and more college students create personas on social networking sites, multiracial students have the opportunity to define their identity however they wish.”

Apart from emphasizing some of the aspects of their personality that truly exist, there are also appropriations of identity through the use of languages or language varieties that do not belong to one’s linguistic repertoire, which will be further discussed in the following sections.

1.8 Kenya and Uganda – language background

Both Kenya and Uganda are highly multilingual and multinational societies: around 40 languages are spoken in Uganda and 70 languages in Kenya. Both states have kept the language of the colonizers, English, as their official language. Nevertheless, in the early 2000s English was spoken by only 30% in Uganda and 20% in Kenya (Schmied 2004a). The other languages spoken by a large percentage of the population are Swahili in Kenya (and partly Uganda) and Luganda in Uganda. Swahili plays an important role in Kenya as the co-official language and lingua franca of the country and the whole East African region (Ogechi & Ogechi 2002). Luganda is the local language spoken by the largest percentage of the population in Uganda, 16% (Ladefoged, Glick & Griper 1972). It is the language of the capital, Kampala and therefore is frequently present in the media.

The local languages of the ethnic groups are spoken within the family or within the limits of the community where the ethnic group is dominant. The literacy in the local languages is acquired only in the lower years of the elementary education and thus stays very basic. After that English takes over the central role as the language of instruction and becomes the dominant language of the written medium (Michieka 2005).

As previously mentioned in section 1, the varieties of English spoken in Kenya and Uganda belong to the Outer Circle (cf. Kachru 1986) of World Englishes (Schmied 2006). Schneider (2007) argues that Kenya is currently undergoing nativization, because of the importance it has in the education, trade and administration. English is taught by Kenyan teachers and textbooks are also produced there. There has been an occurrence of distinctively Kenyan forms on various levels of linguistic analysis. Endonormative stabilization is to be expected in the future since some study results show that Kenyans prefer the educated Kenyan accent to the British and the ethnically-marked one (Kembo-Sure 1991; Kioko & Muthwii 2003). Schneider does not include Uganda in his analysis but it could be assumed that Ugandan English is going through the same phase. The reasons for this assumption are that it has the same status and prestige, a bigger percentage of speakers
and it has been described as a single variety (on the basis of phonology, morphology, syntax, discourse and pragmatics) together with the English spoken in Tanzania and Kenya (Schmied 2004a, 2004b).

Although English has established domains of use, such as in multilingual business environments, in the political bodies and in the media, Ugandans and Kenyans are often said to see it as an alien language that fails to fully express the multiplicity of their identities (Fisher 2000, Laitin 1992). Nabea (2009) explains how the Kenyan population is struggling with the hegemony of English in various ways. In Kenya, English is appropriated in order “fit the circumstances in which it is being used” (Nabea 2009: 129) through modification on the phonological, morphological and semantic levels, through code-mixing and codeswitching and through development of such dialects such as Sheng and Engsh (see below). Nyairo & Ogude (2003) analyze the lyrics of some Kenyan songs and suggest that singing in a mixture of Englishes on the Kenyan music scene is a proof of “englishes” as defined by Aschcroft et alt. (1989: 217) and that it represents appropriation of English, taking control over it and using it so that it is relevant for the society in question. Appropriation of English in Uganda has also been reported on; Fisher (2000: 110) suggests that English in Uganda today is “indigenized” and converted to serve its needs.

Going from the acrolectal to the basilectal variety of English in Kenya and Uganda, various degrees of the indigenization of English can be noticed. While the distinctive features of what has officially been recognized among linguists as the East African English variety can be seen already at the acrolectal level, the basilectal level employs additional strategies of indigenization such as various forms of codeswitching.

Even though appropriation of English is present, Schmied (2004a) writes that the Ugandan and Kenyan English are not openly recognized, except in pronunciation, whereas sticking to the grammar and syntax of the Standard English is still a must in the standard (the acrolect) version of the variety. There is evidence, though, that Kenyans generally have a negative attitude towards those who try to speak with a British accent (Kioko & Muthwii 2003). As the article suggests, they prefer the Standard Kenyan English accent to the British accent as well as to the ethnically marked English accent (English that reveals belonging to a particular ethnic group). This supports the claim that English is currently undergoing endonormative stabilization (cf. Schneider 2007) since there is a tendency of accent standardization whose reference point is no longer outside the country.

Sheng deserves further elaboration. It has the syntactic structure of Kiswahili with lexemes from English and Kenyan languages. Alikam (“she came”) may serve as an example (Githiora 2002: 166). Authors have called it argot, hybrid language and even new creole, but it can be best defined as ”an age-marked, urban dialect of Kenyan Swahili whose outer form is pidgin- like.” (Githiora 2002: 176). Sheng has existed since the 1960s (Momanyi 2009) and it originated in the slums of Nairobi.

Sheng is the language of the urban youth. Its lexis and grammar are fluctuating and depend on the region where it is spoken. The Sheng spoken in different towns borrows from different languages. It has gained popularity and acceptance through popular culture, particularly through radio shows and popular music. There are even tendencies of
standardizing it or at least to start publishing in it (Momanyi 2009). This has caused purist remarks by those who have noticed the drop in quality of the standard Kiswahili speech and writing since Sheng is nowadays taking over, even in the classroom (Momanyi 2009). On the other side, some authors see it as a language that can become a standard (Laitin 1992).

Whereas the grammatical framework of Sheng is Swahili, Engsh relies on the syntactic structure of English in which lexical items from Swahili and other local languages are blended. Engsh enables its users to express "their affiliation with Kenya through including large amounts of lexical material borrowed from Kiswahili and, on the other hand, their openness towards the world, particularly towards American culture." (Meierkord 2009: 10)

1.9 East African English

English in East Africa is often treated as one broad variety spoken on the territory of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. The description which follows is mostly based on Schmied (2004a), who suggests that “East African English can be distinguished clearly enough from other varieties to justify a coherent descriptive entity” (Schmied 2004a: 919) although there are differences between the varieties of English spoken in these countries on each level of the linguistic analysis as well as between registers (basilect, mesolect and acrolect) within the varieties. Because of L1 interference, phonological differences are to be expected between different ethnic groups (Kioko & Muthwii 2003). There have been analyses of Black Kenyan (Hoffmann 2011) and White Kenyan English (Hoffmann 2010) and Ugandan English (Fisher 2000). Schneider (2007), however, mentions the lack of studies on English in Uganda.

Fisher (2000) argues that regional differences in the phonology of English on the territory of Uganda are the result of different L1 interference. However, Baganda way to speak English, as Fisher states, is the fashionable way, because it is spoken in the capital city of Kampala. Therefore, the phonology of Ugandan English generally has Luganda phonology as a substratum. Fisher (2000: 59) writes that speakers from different ethnic groups “will regularly display characteristics in English which do not belong to their mother tongue.”

Some of the prominent phonological features of East African English can be summarized (based on Schmied 2004a) in the following account:

Vowels

In East African English, there is a tendency toward a five-vowel system. The basic characteristics of East African English vowels compared with British English vowels can be generalized as follows:

- Length differences are leveled. The vowels in FLEECE and KIT; GOOSE and FOOT merge, so that there is qualitative as well as quantitative shift. BATH, STRUT and TRAP merge as well
- There is a merger between the vowels of STRUT, NURSE, lettER and BATH
- Diphthongs tend to be monophthongized although the diphthongs with a longer glide are pronounced as double monophthongs

Consonants

- /r/ and /l/ are often rendered as one and the same, so that minimal pairs such as *ram* and *lamb* are homophones
- /θ/ and /ð/ are often realized as /d/ and /t/ or /z/ and /s/ (as in many other varieties)
- /l/ is articulated only in pre-vocalic positions (East African English is a non-rhotic variety)
- Fisher (2000) notices palatalization of /k/ and /g/ before front vowels /i/ and /e/ (for example: *document* /dəˈmənt/)

Phonotactic patterns

Vowels are added to syllables ending in consonants to keep the CV pattern (for example, *hospitali* for ‘hospital’). Consonant clusters tend to be broken by insertion of a vowel (for example, *helep* for ‘help’) or one of the consonants from the cluster is dropped (such as in *neks* for ‘next’).


![Figure 1. The vowels of East African English (mesolectal tendencies) (Copied from Schmied 2004a: 928)](image)

1.10 Global youth culture in East Africa

From the analysis of the literature on the popular youth culture in Africa, it is evident that
the globally popular cultures have reached this territory.

Ntarangwi (2009: 34) suggests that “the sense of identity of youth can be gathered by quick analysis of language and dress”. Suriano (2007) writes about the style of the Tanzanian artistes and says they are mostly influenced by the hip hop and Jamaican clothing style. Ntarangwi (2009: 32) writes about his visit to a compound of the Kenyan hip hop group Ukooflani Mau Mau and describes what he saw there: “…large murals of African American activist Malcolm X, Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie, Kenyan freedom fighter Dedan Kimathi, Jamaican reggae-star Bob Marley, rappers Tupac Shakur and Notorious BIG, and a DJ spinning discs.” Remes (1998: 119) writes about the use of the word “ghetto” among Tanzanian youth and suggests that “some youth link their own situation with life in the ghettos of North America or Jamaica.” Bobi Wine, an artist from Uganda, whose name is often used alongside the title “the Ghetto President”, has said in an interview: ”And, of course, in the ghetto you don’t believe theoretically, you believe practically. Because we’ve managed to do it, we’ve managed to be the living examples for all the ghetto youths. Ours is not just music, ours is a revolution. We are not just artistes, we are activists.” (The Fader Team 2009).

Appropriation of foreign accents, primarily American English, African American Vernacular English and Jamaican Creole is evident in the East African lyrics as well as in the speech of the East African youth (Ntarangwi 2009; Savishinsky 1994a). Ntarangwi (2009) writes that the accent pick-up is common among East African DJs and that it can be heard in the speech of East African artistes when interviewed by foreign journalists. Meierkord (2009) noticed that American English has started to play an important role in Kenya, particularly in the speech of the younger generations in the urban centers. She writes that the global hip hop culture is transmitted to the urban centers via music and interviews with hip hop and rap artists.

However, although the motivation for the appropriation of the foreign covert-prestige accents is, undoubtedly, a wish to sound cool, trendy and tough, the reactions can be negative. Ntarangwi (2009) cites lyrics of a Kenyan song by a female artiste called Wahu, in which she ridicules the fakeness of the American accent used by her suitor. In an article about the African version of the television show Big Brother, the readers criticize the fake American accent of the show’s participants: “Big brother tell the housemates to be themselves. What’s the fuss about American accent? They are really bordering my ass.” (“Housemates Fake Accent” 2007).

Reggae music has been a major musical influence on the music production in Africa (Savishinsky 1994a; Ferrari 2007). The spread of the Rastafari culture and beliefs is closely related to reggae music which became popular quite quickly in Africa, primarily through the musician Bob Marley (Savishinsky 1994a). The Rastafari movement glorifies the African homeland and it is focused on the exploitation of the black people by the modern Western society, known as ‘the Babylon’ among the Rastafarians (Payne – Jackson & Patrick 1996). The values of the Rastafari ideology are very appealing to Africans “who have shared in the suffering and humiliation brought up in their race through centuries of European exploitation and colonial/neocolonial domination” (Savishinsky 1994a: 43).
A new musical genre originating from Jamaica, dancehall, is becoming increasingly popular globally. The rhythm of dancehall is based on reggae and the lyrics are rapped in Jamaican Patois (Savishinsky 1994b). However, as Savishinsky pointed out, not much attention in the lyrics is given to social, religious or political themes (1994b).

Ntarangwi (2009: 27) writes about the dominance of ragamuffin, the style he defines as “a kind of reggae that includes digitized backing instrumentation usually behind dub singing, which is similar in rap music in its focus on rhythmic, assonating and rhyming words – associated with dancehall reggae in Jamaica.”

Gaudio (2011) writes about the Nigerian musicians who combine elements of hip hop and reggae with the Nigerian music styles and appropriate African American English and Jamaican Creole into their lyrics to create a relationship with what Gaudio calls “global Blackness” (cf. Chapter 5). Still, by using Nigerian pidgin and the Nigerian music styles, “they index a distinctly Nigerian public within that transnational cultural space.” (Gaudio 2011: 231)

2. Methodology

The research questions in Chapter 1 were:

1) What forms reflecting the local varieties of English as described in the literature can be identified in the asynchronous communication on Facebook in Kenya and Uganda?

2) What forms reflecting appropriation of other varieties and registers of English can be identified in the asynchronous communication on Facebook in Kenya and Uganda?

The study analyzed 10 Ugandan and 10 Kenyan Facebook Walls belonging to active users (operationalized as changing their Status at least once a week and attracting at least 3 users on average to comment on these statuses). The active users were selected from 2 Kenyan and 2 Ugandan fan groups (for a musician and a public figure of national interest for each country) which consist mainly of local people and have more than 1000 members. From each of those 4 large groups, 5 active users were chosen at random. The sample in question includes the Wall activity from August to October 2010. The size of the sample is approximately 120 000 words (6000 per profile). The size of the sample was calculated by choosing a profile of an average size (my free estimation) and multiplying the number of words from it by twenty. The default text such as dates, names, ”are now friends”, “joined the group”, “likes”, “attended”, “was tagged in” (automatically generated Facebook text) as well as text from Facebook applications that is copied from other pages and usually does not originate from Kenya or Uganda (such as horoscope and various games, for example) is not significant for this study and is therefore excluded from the sample size estimation.

Although this study was not limited to the citizens of the urban communities, Internet in
East Africa is still mainly limited to the users of the urban centers because of the technological requirements. The study did not try to filter the sample according to the age of the chosen profile owners. Nevertheless, young people use Facebook more (statistics show that around two thirds of the Facebook users in Kenya and Uganda are between 18-34 years old (Socialbakers 2013a; Socialbakers 2013b)) and they are also more likely to update their profile regularly. As a result of this, it can be said that the results and discussion will mainly refer to the members of the young urban population of Kampala and Nairobi. It should also be pointed out that 5 female and 5 male users were selected from each country which means that the study is balanced according to the criterion of the gender.

The non-English portions of the texts were translated by one Kenyan and two Ugandan amateur translators. Since they are university students, their competence in English is high, and the advantages of using their services instead of professional translators is that they are members of the urban youth population of Nairobi and Kampala and are, therefore, familiar with the urban slang and the CMC used on Facebook in respective countries. In one or two instances, the translators were not able to translate the text because they were not familiar with the language. In some of those cases they were able to get help from a cousin or friend for the translation, but a few sentences remained untranslated.

This study is based on the analysis of the sample of asynchronous texts from Facebook published on the Profile Walls described above. To help me in understanding these texts, other Internet resources were also used: blogs, newspaper articles and YouTube videos of news, political speeches and the popular music (YouTube comments as well). This enabled me to get a clearer and a more accurate picture of the linguistic reality in Uganda and Kenya, mainly on the language attitudes and language usage in various domains in those countries. Personal correspondence via Skype and Facebook about the youth culture and language in East Africa that I have had with a friend living in Uganda should also be mentioned.

The twenty texts were surveyed generally and it was apparent (a) that many of them were characterized by similar features and (b) that nearly every sentence contained material worthy of commenting. Therefore, it was decided to restrict systematic analysis to only some of the features of the texts, namely, the local forms of English and to the appropriated English forms. In addition to that, my initial intention was to analyze the meanings of codeswitching, the domains of use of English, Kiswahili, Luganda and vernacular languages and to provide a detailed account of the morphology of intraword codeswitching of not only English forms but those concerning local languages as well (for example Kiswahili-Luo, Kiswahili-Kikuyu etc). That would help to give a detailed account of the Ugandan and Kenyan identity-building strategies and an analysis of the asynchronous CMC on Facebook in those countries as a whole, and not only concerning the usage of English. However, that proved to be beyond the size of just one study and the translated material will hopefully be used in further research.

This study will largely make use of the hermeneutic method. Hermeneutics is “the study of interpretation, especially the process of coming to understand text” (Boland 1991: 439).
The results and conclusions were reached by reiterative interpretation of the text, so that the same piece of text could be significant for linguistic and sociolinguistic analysis on several levels. I started noting linguistically significant phenomena on Ugandan pages first. After having read some literature on these phenomena, my comprehension of the linguistics of the asynchronous text on Facebook in Uganda improved. In order to understand the situation in East Africa in a more general way, as well as for the purposes of comparing and contrasting, I decided to analyze a proportional number of Kenyan pages.

This analysis was the result of reflexive reiterative process of reading the text of the samples, the existing literature, the Internet resources mentioned above and non-formal but highly informative conversations with some members of the youth population in Kenya and Uganda. The text was analyzed by reading and annotating the pieces of text significant from the point of view of form (phonology, morphology, lexis, syntax) and content (semantics, idiomaticity, pragmatics and language attitudes).

In this study, I was able to find examples of what has already been discussed in the literature, but also to reach new findings and partially fulfill the gap that had been identified in the literature that I have read. For example, Schneider (2007) points to the lack of knowledge and research on English in Uganda, and Beck (2010) suggests that there has not been research on the urban language in Kampala.

### 3. Results and analysis

#### 3.1 Overview – general language

The examined sample shows that there is a wide range of forms that belong somewhere between Standard English and vernacular languages. I have chosen to observe the text as a continuum because of the number of varieties I have encountered in the analysis of the sample and because of the absence of strictly defined criteria distinguishing one variety from the other. I have identified more or less clearly the following varieties in the sample: Standard English, Standard Ugandan/Kenyan English (acrolectal forms), mesolectal and basilectal Kenyan and Ugandan English, codeswitched pieces of text, prevailingly English texts containing borrowings from the local languages and pieces of intraword codeswitching, prevailingly vernacular texts containing borrowings from English assimilated into the syntax, morphology and phonology of the matrix local language, and purely vernacular texts. The English text of the sample also shows features of other, geographically distant, English varieties and registers that have, however, entered the global sphere and are a means of appropriation and crossing. The vernacular languages found on the Ugandan pages were Luganda, Dhopadhola, Runyankole and Rukiga and on the Kenyan pages Kiswahili, Luo and Kikuyu.

Even if it was sometimes possible to define an utterance as belonging to a certain variety, the conversation on the whole was usually very diverse in a way that there was rarely a
single language or a single language variety present throughout any chosen piece of discourse. Because of the complex nature of the sample, I suggest the reader to view this study as an inventory and description of linguistic phenomena in the asynchronous CMC on Facebook in Kenya and Uganda focusing mainly on the English forms.

The majority of the Kenyan sample belongs to the local variety of English with large portions of Sheng (Kiswahili syntax containing some lexis from English and vernacular languages) and Engsh (English syntax containing some lexis from Kiswahili and vernacular languages). Although the Kenyan translator occasionally made a note in the translation when a piece of text belonged to Sheng, I am not completely sure whether the differentiation from Standard Kiswahili was made at all points.

The difficulties in analysis of the Ugandan sample stem from the lack of literature on the urban variety of English in Uganda, which meant that there was no ready-made category equivalent to Kenyan Sheng and Engsh. With no reference point in the previous literature, it was hard to tell whether those were occurrences of a hybrid languages (similar to the Kenyan ones) or simply examples of borrowing and intraword codeswitching. However, I will argue that there is a hybrid urban language in Uganda, called Uglish, although there were many fewer occurrences of it in the Ugandan sample when compared to the hybrid urban languages in Kenya. The majority of the analyzed text on the Ugandan Facebook profiles was written in English. However, there were instances of large chunks of local languages, mostly Luganda. The Ugandan sample shows almost no presence of Kiswahili except in a few borrowings.

Influence of other languages should be mentioned as well for the purposes of illustration. Borrowings from French have been detected as well as suffixation from Russian. Interesting examples of texts translated by internet engines such as Google translate have been found, however, analyzing the implications of that phenomenon is beyond the scope of this research. Nevertheless, it can be said that languages other than the ones existing in the speaker’s language repertoire have been used in order to serve the purpose of the secret code, play or creating humorous effect, and as a means of provoking reaction.

In regards to what the notion of Standard Kenyan/Ugandan variety could be, it should be mentioned that it is difficult to define it with precision because English in Uganda and Kenya is currently undergoing endonormative stabilization (cf. Schneider 2007). English used in the media cannot be used as a reference point since it differs largely from one newspaper to another depending on its ability to afford a trained editor (Schmied & Hudson-Ettle 1996). Kioko & Muthwii (2003) suggest that the language attitudes of Kenyans towards the different varieties of English should be used in deciding on the variety of English “that could justifiably be called standard Kenyan English” (Kioko & Muthwii 2003: 132) and that would be used in public domains. Their study showed that the preferred variety was neither the native speaker’s variety nor the ethnically marked

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1 I sometimes use the terms “Standard Ugandan English” and “Standard Kenyan English” instead of the umbrella term of East African English because I have encountered them in the literature that promote the need for standardization of the English variety in each of the countries.
variety but Kenyan English. Some of the reasons the informants gave were that it sounds Kenyan, it does not give away the tribe of the speaker and it is no imitation of the white man’s speech.

Most of the English text found on the analyzed pages is written in Netspeak style similarly to the other English varieties. In other words, a large portion of the English text would be unrecognizable as belonging to any particular variety of World Englishes due to the presence of such Netspeak categories as abbreviation, numerical spelling etc. Principles of Netspeak apply locally as well. As a consequence of the speech-like nature of Netspeak, I was able to find local forms of English. Those forms are local in pronunciation, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. The speech-like nature of the text meant that there was a lot of code-switching, which typically occurs in multilingual communities, as well as hybrid languages that do not have a standard written form such as Sheng, Engsh and Uglish.

The English text contained evidence of appropriated forms from American English, African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and Jamaican Creole. The majority of the AAVE and Jamaican Creole examples follow into the registers of hip hop and Rastafari language (Rasta talk) respectively. The lesser amount of English text on the Kenyan pages also meant that the quantity of appropriation evidence from other registers of English was smaller than the one on the Ugandan pages. Although there are studies showing that hip hop and reggae are widely listened to in Kenya, more examples of appropriation of language forms belonging to these cultures have been found on the Ugandan pages. Since the study sample was limited to ten users from each country, no conclusions can be derived about the larger presence of appropriated forms in Uganda in general, or about the larger influence of appropriated forms in the identity building of the Ugandan youth on Facebook via language.

3.2 General style of Netspeak

As previously mentioned, there are strategies that the Netspeak population uses in order to differentiate itself from Standard English, while preserving intelligibility and keeping to a certain norm. Kenyan and Ugandan users do not differ from the speakers of the inner-circle varieties in applying those strategies. These results confirm the findings of Barasa (2010) who examined the CMC in Kenya and found that the Kenyan users apply same strategies as the users of other varieties of English. The following categorization was based on the combination of Shaw’s (2008) and Frehner’s (2008) categories.


Clippings: hav ‘have’, hop ‘hope’, giv ‘give’, sato ‘Saturday’
Initialisms: lol, roflmao
Expressive respelling: sooo, waaaaaaaaaat, oooooops

In addition to these categories, it should be mentioned that Netspeak principles are locally applied. M7 can serve as an example of a number homophone for ‘Museveni’, the Ugandan president. Some examples of expressive respelling are nkt (Kenya) and shyaaa and mschew (Uganda). Nkt and mschew are expressive respellings for “sucking teeth” which is the sound made by “drawing air through the teeth and into the mouth to produce a loud sucking sound” (Rickford & Rickford 1980: 356) and is used to express annoyance and frustration. Judging from the contexts in which it was used, shyaaa is an expressive respelling for frustration, anger and surprise. 2mbavu is an example of a number homophone but it is interesting because the number is pronounced in English while decoding this lexeme whereas the final result is a Luganda word ‘tumbavu’. Barasa (2010) noticed the same tendency in her Kenyan corpus and she called it bilingual use of numericals (for example 2kopo for ‘tukopo’). An example of locally applied abbreviation is visible in ROR-est which has roots in the modified, superlative form of LOL (‘laughing out loud’). Replacing L with R is a way to show common mispronouncing of this phoneme by Ugandans (cf. Section 3.3.4).

3.3 Local forms

Forms that reveal the local phonology of East African English and those that reveal the influence of lexis, morphology and syntax of the local languages will be described in this section. More examples belonging to local forms can be found in Appendix B.

3.3.1 Phonology of local forms

In this section, I do not differentiate (unless otherwise marked) between the Ugandan and the Kenyan results. The first reason for that was that Schmied (2004a), whose account I use as a reference point, treated the phonology of East African English on the territory of Uganda and Kenya (and Tanzania) as a single variety. The second reason was that the size of the sample was comparatively small, so that conclusions on the existence or non-existence of the parallel phonologically-approximated forms could not be made with certainty. Generally speaking, my findings confirm Schmied’s (2004a) account of the phonological features of East African English. The findings also show very clearly that the spoken language has entered the CMC register.
Vowels

Prior to the listing of the respellings revealing or showing the underlying phonology of a number of examples found in the sample, it should be mentioned that East African English is a non-rhotic variety. This is important to bear in mind because insertion or omission of the letter “r” can often reveal vowel mergers. However, respellings showing non-rhoticity may be appropriated from other varieties and registers such as AAVE and hip hop (cf. Section 3.4.2.2) and this mostly applies to the word-final -er being replaced by –a in respellings (undastand ‘understand’, kila ‘killer’, brotha ‘brother’, ovakam ‘overcome’, woma ‘warmer’, wota ‘water’, beta ‘better’, ha ‘her’). Some of the respellings simply show that the variety is non-rhotic and that, even though the speakers are not sure of the correct spelling, they are aware that “r” is not pronounced pre-consonantly (enermy ‘enemy’, tournch ‘touches’).

The following non-standard spellings reveal the underlying phonology of East African English vowel system comparing to British English (RP):

- BATH/CALM/START-TRAP-STRUT-NURSE-(LETTER) merger
  
  RP /æ/ → <ar> [a]
  Bark ‘back’, chart ‘chat’, park ‘pack’, hard ‘had’

  RP /ɑ:/ → <a> [a]

  RP /æ/ or /ɑ/ → <u> [ɑ]
  cut ‘cat’, cum ‘calm’

  RP /ɜ:/ → <a> [ɑ]

  RP /ɑ/ → <ar> [ɑ]
  Arfrog ‘a frog’

- FLEECE – KIT merger

  RP /i:/ → <i> [i]

The decision to treat the FLEECE - KIT examples as mergers is based on the existence of minimal pairs. Examples such as giv, nid etc. cannot be taken as examples of mergers with certainty since they exist in the CMC of Inner-Circle varieties in which there is no
underlying phonology showing merger of vowel length (cf. Frehner 2008).

- DRESS – FACE merger (monopthongization)
  
  RP /ei/ → <e>[e]
  
  sem ‘same’, nem ‘name’, tests ‘tastes’, accomodet ‘accommodate,’ mek ‘make’,
  
  tek ‘take’, gre t ‘great’, se ‘say’, dez ‘days’, med ‘made’

Consonants

- /θ/ and /ð/ pronunciation
  
  Wis, wid ‘with’, zats ‘that’s’, braza ‘brother’

- l – vocalization
  

Meierkord (2009) noticed this as one of the lexical strategies for word building in Sheng and gave an example of capo ‘couple’. While I agree that -o as a means of word building exists in my sample as well, I would argue that Meierkord’s example is an example of l-vocalization and is not created by sound addition, as she suggests. Examples of word building using -o from my sample, created by clipping and adding –o, are: Sato ‘Saturday’, yesto ‘yesterday’, wedo ‘wedding’, sisto ‘sister’, credo ‘credit’ and swimoo ‘swimming’. L-vocalization is not an exclusive property of East African English; it occurs in some Inner and Outer Circle varieties as well (for example Cockney, Singapore English). Although L-vocalization was not listed in Schmied’s (2004a) account of East African English, Bobda (2001) mentions it as “one of the hallmarks of East African English”. Another interesting example, pipol, which Bobda (2001) lists as an example of the acrolectal variety was found on the Kenyan Facebook pages. Whereas pipo, bottoz, singo, lito, hando and unko are representations of the basilectal/mesolectal variety, occurrence of /l/ in pipol is “the reinstatement of a segment suggested by the spelling, in an attempt to approximate the standard British pronunciation.” (Bobda 2001:273)

- l/r merger
  

Not many examples of the l/r merger were found on the Kenyan pages. The only two examples are chersea ‘Chelsea’ and kuceleblate (to celebrate), in which the English lexeme was inserted in the Kiswahili syntax.

23
Phonotactic patterns

- Consonant cluster breaking
  
  *Clothers* ‘clothes’
  
  *Investiment* ‘investment’

- Adding vowels to keep the CV pattern:
  
  *Killu us of talkingi* ‘kill us of talking’

This example may be perceived as being used jokingly when the context of the usage is observed. The author of the Status from which this example has been taken, codeswitched from the non-marked Netspeak style to the basilectal Ugandan variety. Here is the full Status: *ma jaws r tired thnx to warid*, *eh thoz guys want to killu us of talkingi*.

It is interesting to observe how there are two reference point writing systems for the writing and decoding of these spellings: the English writing system and the Luganda/Kiswahili writing system. Barasa (2010) suggests that the phonological spelling taking place in the Kenyan CMC is influenced by the phonemic orthographies of Kiswahili. East African English has a five-vowel system which is neatly represented by one-to-one vowel-to-letter relation that exists in the writing systems of both Kiswahili and Luganda. In other words, this logic of spelling is borrowed into the English spelling in CMC. However, it should be noted that Frehner’s (2008) account of non-standard spelling in text messages from the English corpus suggests that this kind of phonological spelling occurs in the Inner-Circle varieties as well. She gives the example of the spelling *gud* (for ‘good’) which, theoretically, should be read as /gʌd/ but it is read as /god/. On the other hand, she gives the example of the spelling “luv” which is read as /ʌv/. There is apparently no one-to-one relationship between the spelling and its interpretation. There are often several options for interpretation in the choice of which the context plays a significant role. Similar examples were found in the Kenyan and Ugandan sample for this study, for example *buk* and *cut*. The first one has the Luganda writing system as a reference for decoding and is read as /bʊk/. The other one uses the English spelling system for decoding, so that it is read as /kʌt/ even though it reveals the East African phonology of the word ‘cat’.

3.3.2 Intraword codeswitching

The term “intraword codeswitching” can be defined as “the occurrence of more than one language within the same word” (Barasa 2010: 267). Because of the agglutinative character of Kiswahili and Luganda, intraword codeswitching often extends to domain of the phrase or even the sentence when translated. In all the examples below, the morphology/syntax is in one language while the lexical content is in another. Although all of the following are the examples of intraword codeswitching, the data was categorized depending on which language provided the lexical and which one provided the grammatical content.

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2 A Ugandan telecom operator
Since Sheng and Engsh are dialects based on codeswitching (Barasa 2010), it was difficult to differentiate the examples of intraword Kiswahili-English codeswitching from the examples of Sheng and Engsh. My treatment of this problem was based on Barasa’s (2010), who categorized words as belonging to Sheng and Engsh only if they contained the vocabulary specific for these dialects. Because of my insufficient knowledge of these dialects’ vocabularies and the inconsistency of the translators in marking the text as Sheng and Engsh, I chose not to analyze them here. For more information on codeswitching and strategies of lexicalization in Sheng and Engsh, I direct the reader to Ogechi (2005) and Meierkord (2009). Barasa (2010) gives an excellent account on Sheng and Engsh in CMC.

Insertion of English lexemes into Kiswahili syntax on the Kenyan pages


Umeamua kureappear ‘You decided to reappear?’
Unakam wen? ‘When are you coming?’

Insertion of Kiswahili lexemes into English syntax on the Kenyan pages

Kujain ‘coming’ (kuja – come, arrive + clipped present participle inflection –ing), ambiad ‘told’ (ambia – tell + inflection for past simple tense -d), potezad ‘lost’ (poteza – lose + inflection for past simple tense -d), fikiriad ‘thought’ (fikiria - think + inflection for past simple tense -d), juuest ”very cool” (juu – high, great + superlative suffix -est)

might be kujain those sydz nxt wk ‘I might be coming those sides next week’
uv fikiriad ‘You have thought.’

Insertion of English lexemes into Luganda syntax on the Ugandan pages

- Verbal affixation:

Nkumissinga ‘I miss you’, bakneelinga ‘They kneeled’, kicheckinga out ‘I am going to check out’

Nkumissinga nyo ‘I miss you a lot.’
mpozzi baali bakneelinga ddi?? ‘By the way, did they ever use to kneel?’
ku kicheckinga out ‘I am going to check it out.’
Examples of nominal prefixation have been found on Ugandan and Kenyan pages. Some of the Kenyan examples have already been mentioned (*mafansi* ‘fans’, *mabachelors* ‘bachelors’). It is noticeable that double marking of plural, in both Kiswahili and English, is taking place in these examples, a phenomenon noticed by Barasa (2010:114) as well. Similar examples of double marking of plural (in both Luganda and English) have been found on the Ugandan pages using the prefixes *bu* and *ba*, for example *bu chics, bu pick up lines, buhabits, bu wanna be chics, bu ‘paparazzi’, bu-women, ba pipo* (*pipo* is an l-vocalized form of ‘people’), *ba teachers*. Examples of marking plural only with a prefix have been found as well: *bachic, bu lecturer*.

In addition to marking the plural, these morphemes have another role. The morpheme *bu* serves as a sort of premodification of a noun and has two meanings depending on the context. The neutral meaning is “small” and the pejorative meaning is “low quality, inferior, irritating”. The intended meaning is realized in the context. Extralinguistic variables, such as the relationship between the interlocutors, can decide on which nuance of the meaning will be realized. If the interlocutors are close friends, the pejorative meaning can be interpreted as playful and teasing.\(^3\) An insight into Luganda morphology may help us to understand why these prefixes are used. Luganda has ten noun classes, most of which have singular and plural. Belonging of nouns to a particular class can be determined by the prefix. For example, class I contains mainly nouns denoting people, class II contains mostly concrete nouns denoting long objects, etc. Class VI, with prefixes *ka* for singular and *bu* for plural contains nouns denoting small things. These prefixes can be used to create diminutives and nouns with negative meaning. From the examples found in the Ugandan sample, it was obvious that these prefixes were used with the English lexemes in the same way they were used with the Luganda ones. In other words, they were used to give the noun additional meaning which contained the attitude of the speaker towards the object/person in question. Here are some examples that show the usage of the singular prefix:

\[
\begin{align*}
  \text{Ka chic} & \quad \text{‘little/young girl’} \\
  \text{Ka figure} & \quad \text{‘a small figure’} \\
  \text{Ka salary} & \quad \text{‘a small salary’} \\
  \text{Ka gal} & \quad \text{‘a small/young girl’} \\
  \text{Ka villa gf} & \quad \text{‘young girl from the village’}
\end{align*}
\]

The above mentioned examples with the plural prefix (*bu chics, bu pick up lines, buhabits, bu wanna be chics, bu ‘paparazzi’, bu-women, bu lecturer*) contain the additional information of the negative attitude of the speaker towards the object/people signified by the nouns in question.

There are examples of usage of two more prefixes (*gu* for singular and *ga* for plural), belonging to the class VIII, which give the noun pejorative meaning (big and unattractive). The found examples are:

"Gu- pipe" ‘a big pipe’
"Gu goat" ‘a big goat’

- Adjectival prefixation on the Ugandan pages:

The prefix *ka*, which was described in the previous section as a nominal prefix, was found to be used as an adjectival prefix as well. It can be said that it has an adverbial function of emphasizing the quality of the ‘smallness’ in that case and it can be translated as ‘very’ or ‘so’.

Don’t eat *ka* lito ‘Don’t eat so little.’

An example of inserting lexemes from the local languages into the English syntax on the Ugandan pages

One of the lexemes which appeared in the largest number of forms in the Ugandan sample was *wolokoso*. This word was also encountered in many blogs, lyrics, YouTube comments and Facebook fan groups. Here is how a web page defines *wolokoso*: “Wolokoso is a slang that has taken Kampala by storm. Three artistes so far have come up with tracks which they have named Wolokoso with more or less similar meaning as Wolokoso is more to do with ‘useless talk’” (Uganda Music Industry 2010). This word is in the registry of an online urban dictionary (Urban Dictionary 2010) where it was defined as ‘rubbish’. An online newspaper edition explains it as ‘hot air’ (Red Pepper 2012). The following examples can show how this word is used on Facebook:

1a) Stop your wolokoso
1b) Thank God the wolokoso has ended with a draw
1c) That’s wolox. I tell you!
1d) gat multiple personalities... one is musician other is wolokosoic
1e) did anyone confirm the unwolokosoness of those dollars?
1f) Wolokoserz!
1g) Let the wolokosoling bergin!

While *wolokoso* can be treated as a borrowing in the examples 1a) and 1b) because it was used in the original form, the examples 1d), 1e) and 1f) point to the existence of word-building strategies in which the word “wolokoso” carries the meaning and the English grammar serves the morphological function. In 1d), *wolokoso* is turned into an adjective by adding the suffix –*ic*, whereas in 1e) it is turned into an abstract noun by adding the suffix –*ness* and then negated by the prefix *un*-. It is possible that this form was used in a jokey way, since the writer admitted the basilectal tone of the sentence by adding a comment to this sentence: *pardon my Uglish*. Uglish is the stereotype Ugandan English which will be discussed in the last chapter of this paper. In 1f), a plural agent noun was created by adding the suffix –*er* and the plural inflection –s, spelled –*z* in this case (cf. Section 3.4.2.2). 1g) shows how a gerund was formed by adding –*ing* to the original lexeme. *Wolox* in 1c) shows a combination of clipping and suffixation while the word does not change the word class.
3.3.3 Borrowings

Borrowings were identified as follows: single words of another language appeared within large chunks of purely English text, and these words occurred at least ten times in the sample.

Kenyan pages

Examples of borrowings from the local languages were more difficult to find on the Kenyan pages than on the Ugandan ones since the text on the Kenyan pages was usually written using a lot of codeswitching, Sheng and Engsh. Here is an example from the Kenyan sample that can serve to illustrate how mixed the discourse is on the Kenyan pages and how difficult it is to determine the matrix language:

Usifanye nilie, uuuh! Lemi call it aday. Lov u all, mniote, usijali al deal wid it
‘Don’t make me cry (Kiswahili), uuuh! Let me call it a day. Love you all. Good night (‘night’, number homophone), dream of me (Kiswahili), don’t worry (Kiswahili), I’ll deal with it.’

Even if the whole piece of discourse was written in English with only one item in Kiswahili, since it did not repeat on the other Kenyan pages, it was not considered to be a borrowing, but a case of one-word codeswitching and hence beyond the scope of this research. An example of such one-word codeswitching is:

Hop umepata network cuz u rili nee to read ma wall post! ‘I hope you have got network because you really need to read my wall post!’

Even though a few examples of borrowings were identified, it seems that the Kenyan sample has the tendency to draw larger chunks of lexical material into the matrix language rather than single items. The examples that were identified as borrowings are the pronoun wewe ‘you’, the preposition kwa ‘in, on’, the adverb kwani ‘so’ and the coordinating conjunction ama ‘or’. It seems that the last item, ama can serve as both coordinating conjunction and a sort of a question tag (similarly to eller in Swedish). The translation and transliteration will be provided only in the cases where the text is not written in Standard English.

Wewe. nw coz u got examz u wont talk to me
‘Hey you. Now coz you got exams, you won’t talk to me.’

U r all crazy two hours kwa street just talking
‘You are all crazy, two hours on the street, just talking.’

Kwani u neva plan beyond tomorrow?
‘So, you never plan beyond tomorrow?’

They need a partner preferably a single man like me to make sure they don’t drown. Ama?
‘[…]Right?’
Ugandan pages

Examples of borrowings were easier to find on the Ugandan pages since text written in English prevails and repetitive usage of items from the vocabulary of the local languages could more readily be identified as borrowings. These borrowings belong to several word classes: nouns, pronouns, adverbs and conjunctions/pragmatic markers and they belong to the Ugandan vernacular languages if not otherwise stated.

- Nouns and adjectives:

  *nugu* ‘jealousy’, *kika* ‘truth’ (noun) or ‘true’ (adjective), *kiwani* ‘lie’ (noun), ‘fake’ (adjective), *poko poko* ‘gossip’, ‘empty talk’, *lugambo* ‘gossip’, ‘rumours’

    I don't have nugu just telling u what the others think 'I am not jealous, just telling you what others think'
    Truestory! It's a kika! 'True story! It’s true.'
    I reject your kiwani sorry 'I reject your fake “sorry”.'
    Pokopoko, too much 'Too much empty talk'
    Campuserz en lugambo r bst friends 'University students and gossip are best friends.'

- Pronouns:

  *gwe* ‘you’

    Gwe, why sooooo quiet???? ‘Hey you, why are you sooo quiet?’

- Adverbs:

  *nga* ‘when’, ‘like’, ‘as’, ‘as if’, *pakalast* ‘until the end’, *wama* ‘right’ (an expression of agreement or support), *kale* ‘okay’, *wapi* ‘where’ (a borrowing from Kiswahili which is mostly used to express a strong disagreement with what was said previously and in that sense could be translated as “What!”), *sawa* ‘okay’ (Kiswahili), *kawa* ‘cool’.

    eh eh you and other guys nga ur takin it personal ‘Eh, eh, you and the other guys as if you are taking it personally.’
    im with u pakalast 'I’m with you until the end'
    wama tell ha! 'That’s right, tell her!'
    Kale, u chic am warning u. ‘Okay, you chick, I am warning you.’
    sawa... I will ...thx ‘Okay, I will. Thanks.’
    i know bro yo just playing around u know mi am just kawa ma boy lol ‘I know, bro, you’re just playing around, you know me, I’m just cool, my boy, lol’

- Conjunctions/pragmatic markers:

  *naye* ‘but’ (also used to express wonder, surprise as in the English phrase “Come on”), *oba* ‘or’ (used as a question tag as well, similarly to *ama* on Kenyan pages), *mbu* ‘that’ (it gives an additional meaning of disbelief of the speaker to the information given in the
subordinated clause. It can be used as a sentence adverbial as well, and in that case it can be translated as ‘allegedly’ or as a pragmatic marker4 “like”. A comparison with this pragmatic marker as described by Andersen (1998) shows that “mbu” and “like” can both be used to introduce reported speech and that they may suggest loose interpretation by the speaker of the propositional element that follows.)

_Naye u, if I stay in villages where r u then? I thought we share the same house...lol ‘Come on, if I stay in villages, where are you then?’

Everyone loves a computer that already has a super operating system! Oba? ‘[…] Right?’

_Mbu her apartment ran out of water ...so she wants to use my bathroom! NO NO NO ‘Allegedly, her apartment ran out of water […]’_

- **Interjections:**

_**kyoka** ‘really’ (expression of surprise and disbelief, used similarly as the phrase “Come on” in English), **banange** ‘my friends’ (used with the similar meaning as the phrase “Oh, my God!” or “My goodness!” in English)

_kyoka u woman! ‘Come on, you woman!’

_Banange guy has refused to liv our room. ‘My goodness, the guy has refused to leave our room.’_

- **Terms of address:**

_**bambi** ‘sweetheart’, **ssebo** ‘Sir’, **nyabo** ‘Madam’, **munange** ‘my dear’, **mukwano** ‘friend’, **bwana** ‘Sir’ (Kiswahili)

*Sole bambi ‘I’m sorry, sweetheart’

_Is it yr first tym to c one million ssebo? ‘Is it your first time to see one million, Sir?’

_u neva cease 2 amuse me nyabo ‘You never cease to amuse me, Madam.’

_I don’t know munange I lack that experience ‘I don’t know, my friend, I lack that experience.’

_Mukwano post my photos plz ‘My friend, post my photos, please.’

_Bwana plz do ‘Sir, please do.’_

The following quotation might help us understand why these lexical items in particular are borrowed into the English text on the Kenyan and especially, Ugandan pages:

[…] it is clear from a number of cases that words which play a peripheral role in sentence grammar, particularly the grammar of the recipient language: interjections, some types of adverbs, discourse markers and even sentence coordination markers are borrowed relatively easily.” (Muysken 1999:232)

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4 Andersen (1998: 147) defines pragmatic markers as “linguistic elements at word level with the following properties: they are predominantly associated with (especially informal) spoken language, their function is to express pragmatic aspects of communication, for instance by marking propositional attitude or illocutionary force, or by signaling intratextual (sequential) or interpersonal relationships and they do not contribute to the propositional content of the utterances in which they occur.” This term is used interchangeably with “discourse markers” in this paper.
Another reason why these particular lexical items are so frequently used in the asynchronous communication on Facebook lies in the nature of CMC. Frehner (2008: 73) explains that discourse markers, interjections, the linking adverb so, and stance adverbs are "an important feature of email messages (...) and significantly contribute to the speech-like quality of the register." Regionalisms and slang are often used as well since they show the origin of the writer and his/her social background. Since one of the Netspeak’s main qualities is that it is speech-like, it was obvious from the examples of the local forms of phonology, intraword codeswitching and borrowings that the Ugandan and the Kenyan Facebook users are trying to give the written language a “flavor” of the spoken language by employing discourse markers, interjections, stance adverbs, slang and regionalisms (for example terms of address) in the local languages. Codeswitching and the use of Sheng were not analyzed in detail in this paper, however, they contribute a lot to the speech-like quality of the asynchronous language on Facebook. These findings confirm CMC is characterized by the combination of strongly informal language use with a written medium, which means that many vernacular language forms are coming to be written much more widely than before the advent of CMC, and that written interaction in English is opening up to the whole spectrum of world varieties of English, instead of remaining restricted to standard forms of language. (Hinrichs 2006: 17)

The existence of the borrowings has been confirmed on the blogs, online articles, lyrics and Facebook fan groups which proves that they are used not only in the sample, but more widely and that they are elements of the general popular culture. As some Internet articles and blog posts suggest, some of these words are coinages. For example, kiwani was coined by Bobi Wine (Mac Cool 2006). Pakalast was made famous through the song “Pakalast” by the local artist Rocky Giant and was later used by Warid Telecom and in the election campaigns in 2011. Namely, President Museveni was accused “of abolishing term limits in order to become a pakalast president and causing poverty pakalast” (Matsiko 2011a). Wolokoso has been used in the lyrics of popular music, adverts and as the slogan of the Citizens Coalition for Electoral Democracy, “Honour your vote, vote issues not wolokoso” (Matsiko 2011b).

3.3.4 Jokingly used forms

Some of the local forms found in the sample seem to be pronunciation-showing. The occurrence of these forms, which are used to show the local identity, seems to be limited the Ugandan pages. For the explanation of the division according to the conscious intention of the writer to disclose his identity (pronunciation-revealing and pronunciation-showing spelling), I direct the reader to the Section 1.5.

The forms in the Sections 3.3.1 are pronunciation-revealing, which means that they tell us something about the location of the writer and the variety he/she uses in real life (cf. Section 1.5). However, sole bambi to signify ‘sorry bambi’ (cf. Section 3.3.3) is an example of a pronunciation-showing form and so is ROR-est for ‘LOL-est’ from the Section 3.2. Although the summary of the phonological features of East African English
(cf. Section 1.9) tells us that there is a merger of l and r. Schmied (1994a) suggests that it is stigmatized. In addition to r/l merger, there is also CV pattern, an example of which was mentioned before: killu us of talkingi. I have encountered many examples in the Ugandan sample where the Facebook users appeared to be making fun of these and other features of East African English, either by quoting someone who used them or by using them on purpose to create humorous effect. It was inferred that these forms were used jokingly not only from the context but from the analysis of the content of such Facebook Fan groups whose sole purpose seems to be the discussion of these features in a jokingly manner (cf. Appendix 1). On these pages, the users often ascribe these forms as belonging to Ugandan English or Uglish which seem to be used interchangeably to signify a stereotype version of the English variety spoken in Uganda.

This type of respellings is pronunciation-showing and is used to create a persona of a stereotype Ugandan speaker to achieve effects of either humor (example of ROR-est) or closeness (sole bambi). The effect of closeness may be brought by the regional character this pronunciation has which can create a bond between the writer and the receiver on the basis of the common geographic or social background. These respellings are often used in birthday greetings, for example hapi b’day bladi for ‘happy birthday, brother’ which was replied by Sanchu mukwano for ‘Thank you, my friend’. In sanchu, the voiceless dental fricative /θ/ is realized as the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ and there is a palatalization of /k/ in front of /j/ (cf. Section 1.9). Mukwano means ‘friend’ in Luganda (cf. Section 3.3.3). appe basidde for ‘happy birthday’ was found as well, in which there is an initial omission of /ð/ in appe, and /s/ realization of /θ/, as well as adding extra vowels to maintain the CV pattern. In ‘u galodzi kulozi awa dowa’, the pronunciation-showing respellings were used to show keeping the CV pattern as well (galodzi ‘girls’, kulozi ‘close’), whereas awa (for ‘our’) and dowa (for ‘door’) are respellings used to show how diphthongs are pronounced as double monophthongs (cf. Section 1.9).

Most of these examples are used in quotes or are followed/preceded by a comment that shows that they are used on purpose, as if to say that the writers would never use this spelling otherwise since it would mean that they use this pronunciation in real life. An example of the quoted use of the pronunciation-showing respelling would be “I am a selefu-made person!”.

The following example of a Facebook Status followed by comments may help us to understand how Ugandans view the l/r merger, phonological transfers from local languages and CV pattern:

A Facebook Status posted by the profile owner:

2a) I hear ..., “2molo”, ..., lmfao,... ( ‘I hear “tomolo”, lmfao.’ The writer refers to an example of l/r merger (tomolo for “tomorrow”) )

The comments on the Facebook Status:

2b) palasite
2c) I hear arrayg instead ov allergy!
2d) Gandas who dont pronounce ”L”, rest is lest, three is ”fli” or ”siri”.

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In 2a), the user is clearly stating by the abbreviation *lmfao* (‘laughing my ass off’) what she thinks of the pronunciation in the quotation marks. In 2b), 2c), 2d) and 2f) the commenters are giving more examples of the wrong usage of /l/ and /r/. The users in 2d) and 2f) are making generalizations about ethno-cultural groups who tend to merge these two English phonemes (Baganda and Banyankole). In 2d) *siri*, 2g) *miriki* and 2h) *soloti*, the users are also giving examples of consonant cluster breaking, in order to accommodate for the CV pattern of Bantu languages. *Siri* for “three” also shows that the voiceless dental fricative /θ/ can be realised as the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ in the Ugandan pronunciation. 2e) is picturing “onstage” and “backstage” behavior (cf. Section 1.6) of the Facebook profile owner; she publicly presents herself as a person who does not merge /l/ and /r/ and considers that something to laugh about, however in a more private setting, a chat, she was caught off-guard while making the same mistake (*galla go* for “gotta go”). That instance of her /l/ and /r/ merge was then brought “onstage” by her Facebook friend. It is interesting how the colloquial spoken form ‘gotta go’, imported from American English, is localized, by turning the tap from ‘garra go’ into /l/ to create *galla go*. 2h) contains examples showing keeping to CV pattern (*puliizi, soloti*), vowel lengthening marked by letter gemination (*puliizi, daati*) which is result of the transfer from Luganda and the realization of the voiceless dental fricative /θ/ as the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ in *sanki u*.

The text in 2i) and 2j) was created by the same person as the last comment and a sort of a conclusion from the point of view of all the speakers they were making fun of (he uses *asi* ‘us’, and not ‘me’). He asked the other participants not to judge this kind of language use by saying “*mayi fulendi puliizi donti paasi ayizi sulu asi. Totuyisaamu maaso*” (‘My friend, please don’t pass your eyes through us. Don’t pass your eyes through us. (Luganda)’).

### 3.4 Appropriated forms

#### 3.4.1 Introduction

In the process of analyzing the sample, many non-standard respellings were found that were not revealing East African phonology but were clearly deviating from the unmarked CMC orthography. A detailed analysis and comparison with findings from previous research showed that those forms were taken from other registers and varieties through the process called appropriation (cf. Section 1.1). The sources of appropriation come from cultures or subcultures that are perceived as desirable in a way, usually by being “cool”, tough, modern etc. Language is only one of the means of appropriation tokens of these cultures/subcultures. As previously mentioned, it is possible to express loyalty to them by
dressing in a certain way, listening to certain music and on the whole, living a certain lifestyle (cf. Section 1.2 and Section 1.10). This section will try to analyze how appropriation is done in asynchronous communication in the analyzed sample found on Kenyan and Ugandan Facebook pages. The analysis will focus only on the written part, but it should be mentioned that association with the cultures in question was done on the examined pages in other ways as well, such as through posting pictures on which it was visible that the clothing style or the gestures were appropriated from these cultures, and through posting YouTube videos that revealed musical affiliation to those styles.

Appropriation of linguistic material on the Internet has been reported on by many authors. What makes the appropriation possible is the existence of salient features in these varieties that can easily be recognizable and associated to the desired variety or register. An example of how this can be done is the appropriation of London Jamaican by non-authentic speakers in Britain. Sebba (2007: 368) argues that white adolescents use Creole by incorporating “the salient features of Jamaican Creole [JC] grammar and phonology into their speech” and that “the act of ‘chattin’ Patois’ [Jamaican Creole] may involve no more than inserting some Creole discourse markers or lexical items with high symbolic value in a stream of words which is otherwise ‘pure’ London English.” Phonology, as a salient feature that can be appropriated, is expressed through orthography on the Internet. The nature of the CMC, which was described in the introduction, enabled the writers to form their identities as they wish and to creatively use respellings to help them in forming those identities. Sebba (2007b: 160) notices: “The tendency of orthography to become a marker of identity is beyond question.”

In order to illustrate this phenomenon, several examples from previous research will be given. Shaw (2008) argues that the nature of CMC spelling allows the CMC users to represent their identities through the use of phonologically approximated spelling representing pronunciation of words belonging to different varieties. Shaw (2008: 44) writes about the usage of phonologically approximated spelling in “the adoption of a ready-made persona, often based on African-American attributes via hip-hop lyrics (Buchholz, 1999).” He showed that English and Irish users of the social network site Bebo tend to replace ‘th’ by ‘d’ in words such as ‘the’ or ‘that’ in spelling. Although this phonological realization of ‘th’ is not unique for AAVE, Shaw notes it is the source of the non-standard spellings such as da and dat primarily because of the popularity of hip hop. The wide usage of these non-standard spellings shows that “the identity invoked is highly appreciated” (2008: 46). Shaw states that other potential sources of these spellings in the English and the Irish Bebo pages are Jamaican English and London Jamaican, which are covert prestige varieties as well.

Sebba (2003b) examined a number of web forums on which the users discussed the show and the character of Ali G, a fictional character who uses London Jamaican. Most of the participants in the forums use Ali G language which is “modelled on the language used by Ali G in his performances, and used symbolically together with English just as language might be in any bilingual community.” (Sebba 2003b: 15). Sebba (2003b: 2) writes that Ali G language on these web pages is “to a large extent created orthographically, using
unconventional spellings which sometimes, but not always, signal deviation from a standard pronunciation.” The spellings that mark the difference in pronunciation are <t> and <f> for RP /θ/ and <d> for RP /ð/. In addition to that, there are other phonological strategies used to get closer to the London Jamaica pronunciation by means of orthography; one of the users ended his post by re-spec and in that way put additional stress on the stressed syllable and marked the absence of the final consonant by omitting the final letter in the word ‘respect’. In this study, Sebba showed how orthography (especially phonologically approximated spelling) can be used to help create an identity for the Ali G fan web sites users, most of which have never had a chance to use this variety in the offline world.

Androustsopoulos (2007: 291) wrote about the culturally significant key words from hip hop language (similarly to Sebba who mentioned lexical items with high symbolic value) that are inserted into German text. Further on, he says that the vocabulary that is borrowed is for example formulas, openers, farewells and exclamations. He also notices patterns in spelling: ‘z’ for ‘s’ as a plural marker, ‘k’ for ‘c’, ‘ph’ for ‘f’. Androutsopoulos found that Germans started to apply these rules of spellings to their own language (such as in alz for ‘als’) to signify cultural affiliations with hip hop.

A study about hip hop language in Tanzania (Higgins 2009), which examined, among others, online bulletin board postings showed that young Tanzanians use methods such as consonant cluster deletion (an for ‘and’, listenin for ‘listening’), replacement of ‘the’ by da, and ‘my’ by ma, ‘I’m going to’ by ama, the use of –z to mark plurals as well as the positive use of the word niggaz in order to “cross” into the speech of African Americans (cf. Section 1.1)

3.4.2 . Appropriation of American English and African American Vernacular English

We can only speculate what the source of appropriation could be and which target identity the users want to achieve by using particular spellings since some of the features are shared by General American English and African American Vernacular English (AAVE). Ntarangwi (2009: 22) suggests that American English has been popular among the East African youth at least since the 1980s which came from the desire to be “as Western as possible”. The input of American English in East Africa was, reportedly (Ntarangwi 2009), at that time the music of Marvin Gaye and Michael Jackson but it has continued to grow, in East Africa and globally, since then through the emergence of hip hop and through massive film production. As far as AAVE is concerned, the main input channel of this register is probably hip hop music which is an important part of the global youth culture (cf. Section 1.2), however, it is probably not the only one; Feldman (2001) analyzed the lyrics of African American popular music (blues, soul and hip hop) since the 1960s onwards and found the features of AAVE in all of them (copula absence and verbal –s absence). The source of AAVE and General American, thus, cannot be limited to hip hop only, but it probably accounts for a large number of the found tokens of appropriation.
Appropriation of American English and AAVE features in the analyzed sample was found in phonology (represented by orthography), lexis and syntax.

### 3.4.2.1 Phonology

The reference for identifying examples of American English was based on Wells’ (1982) account of American English phonology.

**Vowel quality:**

There is evidence of appropriation of American English \( /\alpha / \) which is realized as \( /\beta / \) in British English and \[o\] in East African English. This appropriation of American English phonology is shown through respellings such as:

- we \( gat2 \) realistic, u \( gat \) ma back, you \( gat \) a point ‘got’, don’t \( bather \) ‘bother’, nat ‘not’, hat ‘hot’, sari ‘sorry’

It can be inferred that this is American English, because the respellings in question do not represent East African English or British English phonology and, to my knowledge, there are no other varieties present on the territory of East Africa that might influence this spelling. Another version that shows appropriation of this pronunciation was found in the sample: gut ‘got’. This shows how the intended meaning of the spelling is context-derived since the participants in the conversation are not mixing it with the homograph “gut” but they are instead reading it as the verb “got” but with American pronunciation. This variation in spelling is the result of the existence of two reference writing systems, which was analyzed in the Section 3.3.1.

**Consonant quality:**

The intervocalic /\(t\)/ is often realized as a tap [ɾ] in American English and AAVE. The appropriation of this phonological feature was visible through respellings in the following examples: swiry, sweery ‘sweety’, buriful ‘beautiful’.

### 3.4.2.2 Appropriation of spelling – iconic/visual appropriation

Beers Fägersten (2006) discussed the discoursive strategies for hip hop identity building and suggested that using \( –a \) and \( –z \) at the end of the word is one of the most frequently applied orthographic practices used to build a hip hop identity. This section will discuss the previous research done on these two letters as well as the examples found in the sample of this study.

**-a appropriation**

Shaw’s (2009) research shows that the \( –a \) instead of \( –er \) at the end of the word is used on the social network Bebo in the US, England and Ireland. He suggests that it originated in the US and then spread to the other parts of the world as a trend. According to Shaw’s research, rhoticity of the user’s variety does not exclude the possibility of using non-rhotic forms (the example of Ireland). British English is a non-rhotic variety, and Shaw suggests
that –a and –er are alternative ways of spelling the word final schwa (in a word such as neva) but he writes (2009: 8) that this type of spelling is not only phonological approximation but it is also attractive “because of the covert prestige carried over from the US texts and associations with hip-hop, London Jamaican, Ali G (Sebba 2003b), etc.” Similarly, it can be concluded that East African English, which is non-rhotic as well, appropriates at least some of the non-rhotic forms from AAVE because of the same prestige hip hop and American English have in East Africa.

When analyzing the appropriated AAVE/American forms ending in –a, I decided to rely on the work of Beers Fägersten (2006). According to her study, –a is used to replace –er in spelling as a nominal ending (rappa ‘rapper’), verbal ending (holla ‘holler’), adverb ending (neva ‘never’) and comparative ending (beta ‘better’). –a does not always necessarily substitute for –er; Beers Fägersten points to the respellings with –a at the end that reflect morpho-phonemic reduction. In those cases, –a substitutes for a whole word or a sound string. Examples for this type of respelling are: buncha ‘bunch of’, shoulda ‘should have’, wanna ‘want to’, ima ‘I’m going to’.

Examples of all these forms have been found on the examined Ugandan and Kenyan Facebook pages as well. In addition to the examples written above, witcha ‘with you’ was found as well. However, we can only speculate whether –a spelling in those examples was phonologically motivated or it was used as a visual/iconic marker. The visual or iconic appropriation implies that the writers had seen it somewhere being spelled that way and used it again because they wanted to index cultural affiliations with the hip hop culture (Androutsopoulos 2007). This function of appropriation will be further illustrated with the example of –z.

–z appropriation

Sebba (2003a) argues that <k> is used to mark otherness and rebellion in Spanish, English and Italian because it is rare in the standard orthographies of those languages. It seems that the letter <z> (used mostly word-finally as –z) has a similar role as a visual marker (Androutsopoulos 2007) originating from AAVE (especially hip-hop culture) and spreading into the other parts of the world through CMC. –z is mainly used as a phonological spelling for nominal and verbal inflections which mark the plural of nouns, possessives and 3rd person singular of verbs. However, this letter is used not only as a marker for phonological approximation in these cases (when the phonological environment causes voicing of the morpheme –s) but even when it is not required by the underlying phonology (for example lyricz, hitz (Androutsopoulos 2007), Beers Fägersten (2006)) or it is added to words without carrying any grammatical information (for example anywayz, laterz (Shaw 2009; Beers Fägersten 2006)). It also occurs in spelling of the words ending in /zl/ or /sl/, such as pliz for ‘please’ or azz for ‘ass’. Androutsopoulos (2007: 292) suggests that –z was originally a phonetic spelling but is now used as a visual marker as well. He argues that “the –z variant is a major global stereotype for hip-hop slang” (2007: 292). It became a symbol carrying the values of being trendy, hip, cool, tough and it is used to index cultural affiliations, similarly to –a that was discussed in the previous paragraph. The main
reason for using –a and –z in respellings “is not phonetic representation, but their indexical or symbolic value as cues of subcultural positioning. In other words, they act as an instruction to interpret the discourse as ‘subculturally engaged’ or ‘hip’ (Androutsopoulos 2000: 527).

The use of –z as a noun plural marker was found on the German, Italian, Norwegian, Greek and French web hip hop forums (Androputsopoulos 2007) and on Tanzanian online hip hop bulletin board postings (Higgins 2009) and in Kenyan text messages (Barasa & Mous 2009). As a word ending, it occurs as a phonological spelling in the Nigerian and Kenyan text messages (Chiluwa 2008; Barasa & Mous 2009), for example in praiz ‘praise’, diz ‘these’, plz ‘please’.

Similarly to –a spelling described above, -z spelling is not always appropriated. Those, non-appropriated, –z forms are phonologically motivated by the local pronunciation (2geza ‘together’, z ‘the’, zats ‘that’s’).

The following types of –z word-finally were found in the sample of this study:

2) Not phonologically motivated (since <s> is preceded by a voiceless consonant): Watz ‘what’s’, itz ‘it’s’
3) Dummy suffix: sawaz ‘okay’, poaz ‘good’ (slang from the Kenyan pages belonging to Sheng/Engsh), yestoz ‘yesterday’ (found on a Ugandan page)
4) Added to names: Gibbz, Shiggz

The examples dez and alwez also show DRESS/FACE merger that occurs in East African English. Campusaz is a respelling that shows both substitution of –er for –a and –s for –z. In the respellings frenz, juz and lez, phonemic reduction in pronunciation is reflected as well (dropping of a consonant from the cluster). It is hard to tell whether all the examples of respellings listed in 1) are motivated only by underlying phonology or represent iconic visualization as well, however, it is important to take into consideration the popularity of hip hop in East Africa which might lead us to conclude that Kenyans and Ugandans are versatile in the spelling trends connected to this subculture. The importance of this particular letter in respellings should not be underestimated. Blommaert (2010: 192) gives an example of how important this letter is for the identity expression in the spelling of Tanzanian urban youngsters; while he was making notes, they observed and corrected his spelling and insisted that he writes totoz ‘girls’ with the “hip-hop slang plural suffix ‘-z’, tying the use of the term firmly to transnational Gangsta culture by exploiting the morphology and orthography of Swahili.” The control over the written form “offered opportunities for semiotic alignment with the local and the translocal.” (Blommaert 2010: 193)

As far as the examples from the group 3) are concerned, some studies (Barasa 2010)
suggest that –z is a marker of Engsh in CMC. In this study, Barasa found that –z is used to mark plural not only for the words in English but also in Swahili, Sheng and vernacular languages. In addition to that, it is added as a suffix without any grammatical value. She calls it a dummy suffix that is used only to give words a foreign sounding character. Barasa (2010), however, does not mention the influences of hip hop culture and of hip hop orthographic practices which should arguably be taken into consideration. In regards to the example from the Ugandan page, yestoz, it is important to notice two processes it underwent: clipping and addition of both –o and –z at the end of the word. Both clipping and addition of –o and –z are means of lexicalization in Engsh (Meierkord 2009; Barasa 2010) which suggests that Uganda may be developing a urban language on its own through borrowing means of lexicalization from the urban language of the neighbouring Kenya. However, it should be noted that clipping and –s suffixation have been identified as slang-creating strategies in the Inner Circle varieties as well (McCumber 2010).

3.4.2.2 Appropriation of lexis

In the analyzed sample, single lexemes as well as phrases from AAVE have been found. All of them have high symbolic value (cf. Section 3.3.1) and can easily be associated with hip hop subculture. The single lexemes that were found are bro, nigga and ghetto. The following excerpt from a Ugandan Facebook page can show us attitudes that the conversation participants have towards what they perceive as the AAVE pronunciation and vocabulary.

Facebook Status posted by the owner:

Ok, I know you are trying to be hip but calling BRA instead of BRO kind of gets me scared.

Comments:

Friend A: That trend is going on there too? Gets me scared as well!
Profile owner: Indeed. Someone yells bra and expects you to respond! More so with a “Yo!
Friend B: That BRA sleng is used by black Americans. It’s spreading across the world like chicken pox :)
Friend C: Quit whining! Let niggas be niggas
Profile owner: Niggas? Huh! Impressive – coming from you
Friend C: Black man don’t care wat others think...It’s our trademark... The bra regime is on, so do urself a favour en live wid it
Profile owner: Did you say you are a “nigga” or are my eyes failing me...

The profile owner expressed his dislike of being called a ‘bra’, perhaps marking the AAVE pronunciation with the spelling. Two of his friends then commented on the widespread of the AAVE forms globally. The friend C positively identified with African American culture (bra regime), and uses the words nigga and black man to suggest the unity of the African Americans and Africans based on race. However, the profile owner refuses to identify with the word nigga in a positive way.

Another example of the appropriation of AAVE lexis is the phrase ‘What’s up?’ which is very characteristic of the hip hop culture. It was found in the form of various respellings in
the sample:
- Consonant cluster reduction: *was‘up, wazzup* (representation of voicing is present in this spelling as well).
- Omission of the unstressed syllable: *sup, tsup, s‘up
- Tapping: *wadup, warrup*

3.4.2.3 Appropriation of AAVE morphosyntactic features

The following examples were categorized as appropriations of AAVE morphosyntactic features based on Wolfram (2004). Appropriation of invariant BE has been noticed (*u know how i be*), and invariant BE + V-ing to express a habitual action (“*dont u be posting these things*”, “*surely we be talking about u paying the landlady*”, “*u be shooting blanks*”). Wolfram (2004: 326) points out that invariant BE is “probably the most salient grammatical trait of AAVE, to the point of becoming a stereotype.” Examples of what seems to be appropriation of the AAVE use of “*them*” as a determiner were found as well in the respellings *dem* and *them*: *dem chics, dem feet, dem dayz, them fotos.*

3.4.3 Appropriation of Jamaican Creole and Rasta Talk

In Section 1.10, I wrote about the popularity of the Jamaican music styles. In addition to that, there is evidence that appropriation of Jamaican Creole might be taking place in East Africa. Savishinsky (1994a) gives an example of the Zimbabwean youth who started wearing dreadlocks, speaking Rasta talk and wearing Rasta colours back in the 1980s. There is evidence that the Rastafari movement is active in Uganda and Kenya from the existence of at least one Facebook fan group (Uganda Rastafari Movement 2011) and YouTube video about Rastafari movement in Kenya (K24 TV 2011) and that there is use of Rastafari language present in both writing (on the Facebook page) and speech (in the videos). The register associated with the Rastafari movement, Rasta Talk or Dread Talk, does not differ from the Jamaican Creole on the phonological or syntactic levels. It is, however, characterized by specific choice of lexemes, selected mostly to create a metaphorical effect (Pollard 1980). Pollard points out that Rasta Talk is “an example of lexical expansion within a creole system” (1980: 32).

The evidence I found on the Kenyan and Ugandan Facebook profiles show presence of appropriation of certain salient features of Jamaican Creole, such as phonology (cf. Devonish & Harry 2004), discourse markers and lexical items with high symbolic value, similarly to those in Sebba’s study of appropriation of Jamaican Creole by the non-authentic speakers in London. In addition to that, a set of lexical items belonging to Rasta Talk was found as well (cf. Cassidy & Le Page 2002; Reynolds 2006).

- Lexicon: agwaan (has a similar meaning to ‘What’s up?’), blood claat (a pejorative expression), pon ‘upon’, booyakasha (a greeting), jamdung (a slang word for Jamaica), yute (a young man), big up (‘What’s up?’ or an expression of tribute)
- Rasta Talk lexis: Rastaman, Rasta, Babylon (the Western world), Jah (God), Jah bless, one love, zion, i en I ‘I and I’

Rastaman...good tings r gwan a pon me place
Jah will guide you
Jah bless
Nuttin a guan! Jah fire will burn Babylon and spread Jah seed pon d land
Rasta big ting ah gwan fi yo head! Big up!
Tear drops one love!
RIP may the almighty receive u in zion
If u av failed2 get a trustworthy frd am here...Count on i en i...

3.4.4 Appropriation from other languages

A few examples of respellings of the objective form of the personal pronoun “I” were found, that seem to be associated with its French equivalent “moi”: mwa and moi. An interesting example of the suffixation of the English word with a Russian suffix was found: friendushkahs. To my knowledge, the Russian culture is not a significant in Uganda, however, it might have entered the linguistic repertoire of this writer through the word “babushka” that most people are familiar with. Meierkord (2009) points to examples of Slavic suffixation in Engsh, such as eveski (I decided to take a nap in Oduor’s car before the yet-to-unfold events of eveski.), funnyski and headski, but she suggests that they do not add any meaning to the words.

4. Discussion

In this section, the research questions will be discussed in the light of the results given in the previous chapter. The research questions were:

1) What forms reflecting the local variety of English as described in the literature can be identified in the asynchronous communication on Facebook in Kenya and Uganda?

2) What forms reflecting appropriation of other varieties and registers of English can be identified in the asynchronous communication on Facebook in Kenya and Uganda?
4.1 The forms reflecting the local variety of English

The results show that non-standard spellings revealing the distinct phonology of the local variety of East African English are used in asynchronous communication on Facebook. The examples from Section 3.3.1 confirm Schmied’s description of East African phonology. There is a merger between the vowels of STRUT, NURSE, letTER and BATH and a merger of length in the vowels of FLEECE and KIT evident in respellings. Diphthongs are monophthognized, which was evident from the DRESS – FACE merger. As far as consonants are concerned, /θ/ and /ð/ have been presented in spelling in such a way that they reveal the realization of those consonants as /s/, /d/ and /z/. The merger of /l/ and /r/ has been revealed in non-standard spelling as well. When this merger is concerned, it is important to compare the data from this study with the study of Barasa (2010) who found similar examples in her study of Kenyan CMC. Barasa (2010), however, categorized the respellings revealing this merger as misspellings, together with some respellings revealing vowel mergers, which are “written the way they are pronounced due to the influence of the vernacular language” (Barasa 2010: 87). I would argue, however, that there has to be a terminological distinction between a misspelling and a respelling such as for example, bressings for ‘blessings’, which reveals the local pronunciation and could be termed, as such, a pronunciation-revealing respelling (cf. Section 1.5). Barasa (2010) argues that the respellings revealing vowel mergers are the result of word confusion, however, I would disagree with this statement, since Frehner (2008) showed that phonological approximation is a characteristic of the CMC style in general.

There has also been some evidence of respellings that reveal the underlying breaking of consonant clusters and vowel addition to syllables ending in consonants. Bobda’s (2001) findings have been confirmed by the results of this study, showing that there are respellings that reveal both the acrolectal and the basilectal/mesolectal version of l-vocalization.

The Kenyan and the Ugandan samples show most similarities in non-standard spelling when it comes to the phonology of the local forms of English. The differences in morphology and syntax are bigger, not only because the local languages are different but because the texts, as wholes, differ in the quantity of instances of intraword codeswitching. The Kenyan sample has more of them since Sheng and Engsh have entered the written discourse in the asynchronous communication on Facebook (cf. Section 3.1 and Section 3.3.3). However, it can be said for both Kenyan and Ugandan samples that there is evidence of insertion of the English vocabulary into the syntax of the local languages and of insertion of the local languages into the syntax of English.

Examples of nominal prefixation have been found in both samples, for example mabachelors for ‘bachelors’ (Kenya) and buhabits for ‘habits’ (Uganda). As the analysis in the Section 3.3.2 showed, this is not just a strategy for marking the plural. The Luganda prefixes are a way of adding additional meaning to those nouns which would otherwise have to be expressed by other grammatical means, such as by an adjective or a relative clause. Those prefixes are polysemous and the concrete meaning can be derived from the context and from the collocational relation with the noun in question. Since Barasa (2010)
found *ka* prefixation in her Kenyan CMC corpus as well and suggested that it is can be used as a nominal or an adjectival prefix on foreign nouns and adjectives, it can be concluded that similar intraword codeswitching strategies are taking place in the Kenyan and Ugandan samples. As far as the Kenyan examples of nominal prefixation (*mafansi* and *mabachelors*) are concerned, Barasa (2010) argues that using the English suffix for plural in such cases, where plural is already marked by the Kiswahili prefix, is an identity marker of Engsh. The existence of the double marking of plural in the Ugandan sample may suggest there are similar linguistic processes pointing to the formation of an urban dialect in Uganda similar to Engsh in Kenya.

Another similarity between the Kenyan and the Ugandan samples was found in the examples of inserting lexis of the local languages in the English syntax. The Kenyan examples confirm the findings from Barasa’s (2010) study where adding English tense and aspect markers to the verbs in local languages was categorized as examples of affixation in Engsh. The example of the word *wolokoso* from the Ugandan sample showed that this word has been adopted into English syntax by using a variety of morphological means. Again, similarity in the findings in Barasa’s (2010) and this study may suggest that an urban dialect of similar structure to Engsh may be developing in Uganda.

The comparison of borrowings in the Kenyan and the Ugandan samples with Frehner’s (2008) findings and analysis showed that most borrowings adopted into the asynchronous CMC local variety of English are the ones that greatly contribute to the spoken-like character of CMC. The analysis of Ugandan blogs and newspaper articles showed that most of the borrowings belonging to the classes of nouns and adjectives from the Ugandan Facebook pages have been made popular by the popular culture and that they are widely used on the streets of Uganda (Sabiti 2012) and in political advertising (Matsiko 2011a).

A phenomenon that seems to be limited to only the Ugandan part of the samples is related to the local forms used jokingly. Namely, as the Section 3.3.4 shows, some local forms have been found to be used purposefully to create humorous effect or what can be perceived to express regional closeness and empathy, which contributes to the spoken-like character of CMC. It is, however, important to notice that, regardless of the relaxed style of the Netspeak spelling, the writers are careful at editing their text when it is released “onstage” (cf. Section 1.6). The example from the Section 3.3.4 shows how the writer was more relaxed when communicating backstage, in the more private setting of the chat, where she released an unedited version of the stigmatized l/r merger. This supports the view of Walther et al. (2011), cited in the Section 1.7, who point to the awareness of the web-users in creating the balance between the disclosure and the distortion in the selection of communication strategies. Although this merger was found in its pronunciation-revealing form, where it simply revealed the underlying phonology, it was found much more often in its pronunciation-showing form, to quote what someone else said or to discuss the local character of this pronunciation, or to show affiliation based on the same geographical background of the participants in communication. The pronunciation-showing forms are used as well to emphasize the other phonological features of the local variety, such as breaking of consonant clusters, adding vowels to keep the CV pattern and pronunciation of
diphthongs as double monophthongs. Sometimes, these forms were explicitly said to be belonging to Uglish (for example, *Pardon my Uglish, In true Uglish I would say [...], I see ur fluent in “Uglish” hi hi hi*). From the Facebook sample data, Uglish seems to be a stereotype Ugandan English whose features have been found in the forms of respellings both revealing and showing the underlying phonology and morphology of this register and syntactic and idiomatic transfers from Bantu languages. A more detailed analysis of the salient features of this register can be found in the Appendix 1.

4.2 The forms appropriated from different English varieties and registers

The analysis of the results in Section 3.4 shows that Ugandans and Kenyans appropriate a variety of language forms from American English, AAVE and Jamaican Creole in the asynchronous communication on Facebook. In the analysis of the results it is important to keep in mind Sebba’s (2007a) suggestion about the importance of the salient features in the act of appropriation. The results show that, in order to appropriate a form through respelling, the users relied on their knowledge of the salient features of the dialect or the variety in question. Those salient features belong to the phonology, lexis or grammar of the source dialect/variety and, having a high symbolic value (cf. Sebba 2007a), they are able to revoke the feeling of authenticity of usage. A lot of examples of word-final –a and –z spelling were found. Many of the examples were identical to the ones found in the previous researches, which shows that the covert-prestige social meanings carried by these appropriated forms have reached the CMC in Uganda and Kenya. It should be noted that all the respellings from this section are pronunciation-showing by nature (cf. Section 1.5) since the writers are consciously using the respellings whose underlying phonology belongs to a “persona” considered to be “cool”, tough, modern etc.

5. Implications of the study

From those results, we may infer that the new principles of non-standard spelling are employed to reveal and show the phonology of East African English and that orthography is being used to design and show the local identities originating from the territory of East Africa. English fulfills the role of expressing some of those identities. On the Ugandan pages, for the large part, it has a neutral meaning, since the written medium in Uganda neutrally belongs to English more than any other language. On the Kenyan Facebook pages, however, this meaning of using English is shared with Kiswahili which is widely spoken and written in Kenya. The Netspeak form of English is the relevant neutral form appropriate for the use on the Internet globally which is the form used by the Ugandans and
Kenyan as well. Another usage of English on the Ugandan and the Kenyan Facebook pages is the one revealing the East African English phonology. This usage of English can be argued to have a neutral meaning on this territory since the East African accent is starting to be preferred as the national norm (cf. Section 1.8). However, this is not the case with all the phonological features of East African English. While the vowel mergers seem to be a non-marked pronunciation-revealed respelling, the l/r merger and the CV pattern are marked and in most cases, pronunciation-showing which can be seen on the Ugandan pages. That can lead to the conclusion that the Ugandans are expressing the forms so far limited only to the spoken medium because the nature of the CMC encourages this part of their linguistic reality to be used in writing (cf. Hinrichs 2006, Baron 2008). Nevertheless, they still seem to apply editing in the “onstage” setting (cf. Section 1.6) of the asynchronous communication on Facebook Walls or use some of the forms only in a humorous setting which means that the asynchronous communication on Facebook is still subject to certain orthographic standards. However, these local forms are used to express regional connectedness and the common social background which means that they are employed to express the local, Ugandan, identity. The results, together with the analysis of blogs and online newspaper articles, showed that the popular culture in Uganda presents a source of new linguistic material which becomes incorporated into daily usage. Although there is evidence on the Ugandan pages as well as in blogs and online newspaper articles that a new urban dialect similar to Sheng and Engsh might be developing in Uganda, it does not have the same, covert-prestige, meaning of usage as those dialects do on the Kenyan pages.

Another meaning of English was found on the examined pages, when English was used for the appropriation of forms from American English, AAVE and Jamaican Creole. This meaning of English is in connection to the flows of discourses that have entered the global sphere (cf. Section 1.1 and 1.2). The transnational character of these cultural phenomena and the relationship with global Blackness (when AAVE and Jamaican Creole are concerned) (cf. Section 1.1) enables the Kenyan and Ugandan Facebook users to “culturally relocate” themselves (Blommaert 2010). English is a deterritorialized language as Blommart (2010) suggests but its various forms are deterritorialized as well. The results have shown that the language forms belonging to American English, hip hop and reggae have been drawn from the global sphere into the asynchronous communication on Facebook in East Africa.

These results can be interpreted in connection to other Blommaert’s (2010) terms. Fluidity of the language, styles and varieties is evident, since the registers, styles and varieties change within the single piece of discourse. It is hard to classify pieces of discourse as belonging to a certain language even if codeswitching is taken into account. It would be interesting to watch the fluidity of the linguistic material fluidity if a comparative study would be done in a few years’ time. Mobility, which Blommaert mentions as the important aspect of globalization is evident from the results. There is mobility of the languages, styles and cultural forms across the varieties and of the people in the virtual space. On another level, there is also mobility of identities and fluidity in the self-presentation on the examined Facebook profiles.
To conclude, in the asynchronous Facebook communication, Kenyans and Ugandans employ different lexical, syntactic and orthographic strategies in order to express a variety of global and local identities. Although they are using English, which is not native to the East African territory, it is obvious that they are using a variety of its meanings in order to accommodate the expressions of the multiplicity of East African identities. By using a variety of the meanings of English, they are negotiating the local in the global. This enables them to engage in the global trends while remaining loyal to the local ground.
References


Appendix A

This material has been gathered from several Facebook fan groups where Ugandan Uglish or Uglish were discussed extensively in an informal manner. These Facebook pages have been highly informative in providing data for not only the possible definition of the salient features of Uglish but for the understanding of the social background of its use and the language attitudes of the Ugandans to it.

The Facebook fan group "Ugandan English (Uglish)" (2010) has 18 200 users. In the info section of the page, it is stated: "This is the home of all those who appreciate Ugandan’s efforts at speaking the English language, or those who simply get amused by the absurd attempts!". Additional information is posted in the personal information section: "If there is British English, and the Americans can get away with ruining it and call it American English, why can’t there be Ugandan English, or Uglish??" The profile photo features the Ugandan flag on which it is written: "Ugandan English and proud of it!" A member wrote: "From what is being written it seems Uglish is a collection of gramatically wrong sentences and mispronounced words...lol.” The comments followed: "Not really, its Ugandans expressing what the other Ugandans say in everyday speech.” "Its the next generation of the English language.” "Uglish is the language campusers speak.”

The members of this Facebook fan group are aware of the salient features of Ugandan English. They use this space to discuss them in a humorous manner:

a) Phonological (replacement of /l/ by /rl/)
   What langrage do you hear? (‘language’)
   You people, ´arways´ making me laugh (‘always’)
   I like wearing bring bring. (‘bling bling’)

b) Idiomatical/collocational:
   I came on leg (‘on foot’)

c) Lexical/morphological:
   I dont eat meat, am a vegetable (‘vegetarian’)
   Dont be jealousy! (‘jealous’)

d) Vowel insertion in order to create a CV syllable pattern and vowel lenghtening influenced by the substrate Bantu languages
   my mobilo phooni haz bluetooth and a toucha screemu, muziki prayer and kamela not forgetting filimu ‘My mobile phone has bluetooth and a touchscreen, a music player and a camera not forgetting film.’

Another linguistically aware Facebook fan group is called "Seya SeBB’s ‘Seyology’ " (2010). As its products, the creators of this page listed "Linguistics – SEYA’S LANGUAGE AND ORIGINS" and in the info section, they wrote "UNIVERSITY OF LINGUISTICS, DEPARTMENT OF SEYOLOGY”. The members of this Facebook page
post and comment on the usage of English by the mayor of Kampala, Nasser Ntege Sebaggala (nicknamed Seya). In the "Uglish" fan group, the mayor of Kampala is voted amongst "the most outstanding Uglish speakers" by the members of this group. Here are some examples of the posts on the page of "Seya SeBB’s ‘Seyology’":

3a) "Kampala streets was dark but when i comes in as major, its lightning" Seya u simply rock!!
3b) Seya’s manifesto...To improve on passportation (transportation) in kampala
3c) Host: Seya wat wud you do if there was a bird flu outbreak in Kampala. Seya: Flu is flu whether bad or good...we shall kick it out
3d) guys, English is a foreign language like chinese, french, lingala etc. We subject ourselves to neo-colonialism when we criticize each other for not speaking foreign languages fluently. Chill seya’s english. Attack his activities

In 3a), the one who posted the comment is pointing out to the inappropriate usage of grammar (streets was, i comes) and vocabulary (its lightning). In 3b) the attention is brought to the inappropriate lexicon (passportation), whereas in 3c) the funny effect was created by the merger of /ɜː/ and /aː/, so that “bird” and “bad” sound the same. The target variety of English in English is still not uniform, as the evidence of language attitudes in 3d) suggests.

“You know you’ve been in Uganda for a long time when...” is another page which sheds some light onto the current linguistic situation in Uganda. It is also dedicated to the lifestyle, politics and culture in Uganda. As far as the linguistic situation is concerned, the info section lists some of the members’ contributions to the page were:

You know you’ve been in Uganda for a long time...

4a) when someone almost knocks you off the road and then says: “solly, but i have indicated” (Vr merger)
4b) when clothes becomes a two-syllable word. Clo – thes. (breaking of the consonant cluster /ðz/ by inserting /e/ in order to align with the CV syllable pattern of Bantu languages)
4c) when instead of asking to be passed something you say stuff like “Please assist me with the salt” (specific choice of vocabulary)
4d) when you call a cab “a special hire” (a compound created to refer to what “taxi” is in British English, whereas “taxi” in Uganda refers to a minibus)
4e) when it is o.k. for another guy to impulsively call you “My dear”. (pragmatic peculiarity concerning terms of address depending on the gender)
Appendix B

Intraword codeswitching (cf. Section 3.3.2)

Insertion of English lexemes into Luganda syntax on the Ugandan pages (nominal affixation):

**ka**
Facebook Status: *Paps just called me “ka gal” is he ok?*
Comment A: *U can never grow infront of yo parents*
Comment B (the author of the Status): *Then i imagine at 40 he myt stil kol me ka gal eh* ‘Then I imagine at 40 he might still call me “ka gal”, eh.’

**bu**
*All of you bu-women who are calling me a boy! I am warning u!*
Facebook Status: *What’s the best way to satisfy a man?*
Comment: *Ignoring his buhabits.*

*Some bu lecturer are fake en doomed.*

**gu**
*they should creat a direct gu-pipe to drain into the declining L.Victoria!!!*

_Hope it’s a ka goat nt a Gu goat as big ass a hipo_
‘Hope it’s a small goat not a big goat as big as a hipo.’

Borrowings (cf. Section 3.3.3)

Kenyan pages:

**Wewe**
*Pessimist wewe!*
‘You pessimist!’

**kwa**
*Xhausted! Muscle pulls kwa ma fingerz, blac out, aaarg!*
‘Exhausted! Muscle pulls in my fingers, black out, aaarg!’

**kwani**
*Kwani kenya is a giant pond full of frogs?*
‘So, Kenya is a giant pond full of frogs?’

**Ama**
*Isn’t there some malice ama its pure coincidence*
‘Isn’t there some malice or it’s pure coincidence?’
Ugandan pages:

Gwe

Gwe, where u hiding? ‘Hey you, where are you hiding?’

Nga

i call or text my roommate, n we chat! Nga we r both in the room!
‘I call or text my roommate and we chat! When we are both in the room!’

yo mean nga u hadn’t jazzd me about highschool stuff ‘
You mean like you hadn’t talked to me about highschool stuff.’

Kale

kale, do as u please ‘Okay, do as you please.’

Naye

the fish we always drew in school was ever smiling... naye this one is so sad
‘[...] but this one is so sad’

Oba

I woz told it mnz dat.oba iz t tru?
‘I was told it means that. Or is it true?’

Mbu

Mbu am spoiling you, you are already spoilt
‘Like I am spoiling you, you are already spoilt.’

Gwe u chic! What r u saying! Mbu u can do better oba?
‘Hey you, chick! What are you saying? Like you can do better, huh?’

Kyoka

kyoka this hostel askari has a laptop!
‘Really, this hostel askari (a guard) has a laptop!’

Banange

Baaanange, after Inna, thr is another kisoap...
‘Oh my God, after “Inna”, there is another stupid soap opera...’